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# IMMORTAL YEARS



*Author of :*

**UPHILL**

**STRUGGLE**

**I LOVED GERMANY**

# IMMORTAL YEARS

(1937 — 1944)

*As Viewed from Five Continents*

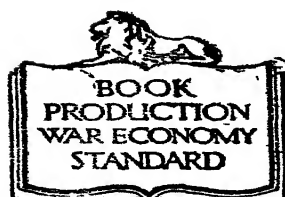
JOHN EVELYN WRENCH

HUTCHINSON & CO. (PUBLISHERS) LTD.

LONDON : NEW YORK : MELBOURNE : SYDNEY

TO MY WIFE

TIBI QUAE, SIVE LUCENTE BENIGNO SOLE  
SIVE TEMPESTATE MINANTE, CUM TENERUM  
TUM SENIOREM VELUT SIDERA NAUTAS DIREXISTI.



THIS BOOK IS PRODUCED IN  
COMPLETE CONFORMITY WITH THE  
AUTHORIZED ECONOMY STANDARDS.

MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN AT  
THE FLEET STREET PRESS  
EAST HARDING STREET, E.C.4

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	7
<i>PART ONE</i>	
PRELUDE . . . . .	9
CHAPTER	
I ATLANTIC CROSSING . . . . .	19
II WAR-TIME CANADA . . . . .	21
III BERMUDA, ATLANTIC FORTRESS . . . . .	26
IV NEUTRAL AMERICA IN 1940 . . . . .	28
V MEXICAN INTERLUDE . . . . .	36
VI THE FRIENDLY SOUTH . . . . .	40
VII FAREWELL AMERICA . . . . .	45
VIII HONOLULU AND BEYOND . . . . .	49
IX NEW ZEALAND—"GOD'S OWN COUNTRY" . . . . .	55
X AUSTRALIA AFTER 28 YEARS . . . . .	59
XI A MONTH IN JAVA . . . . .	64
XII SINGAPORE—BASTION OF EMPIRE . . . . .	72
XIII TO CALCUTTA VIA RANGOON . . . . .	81

## PART TWO INCREDIBLE INDIA

I FIRST IMPACT . . . . .	87
II UNTOUCHED INDIA . . . . .	93
III FIRST VISIT TO GANDHI'S ASHRAM . . . . .	99
IV FLOODTIDE OF DISASTER . . . . .	107
V MYSORE AND TRAVANCORE . . . . .	114
VI INDIAN POLITICAL MAZE . . . . .	125
VII JINNAH MASTER MUSLIM . . . . .	132
VIII THE ASHRAM AGAIN . . . . .	137

CHAPTER	PAGE
IX    BAFFLING BENARES . . . . .	140
X     PESHAWAR—GATEWAY OF INDIA . . . . .	151
XI    AFTERMATH OF CALAMITY . . . . .	155
XII   CRIPPS IN DELHI . . . . .	161
XIII  TALK WITH JAWAHARLAL NEHRU . . . . .	165
XIV   AMERICA RELATIONS OFFICER . . . . .	168
XV    CONGRESS DISTURBANCES . . . . .	172
XVI   MEMORIES OF OLD DELHI . . . . .	179
XVII  THE GANDHI FAST . . . . .	188
XVIII AFGHANISTAN . . . . .	191
XIX   INDIA AND THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH . . . . .	200

### *PART THREE*

I    CONVOY TO MIDDLE EAST . . . . .	205
II   THE HOLY LAND . . . . .	208
III  ARAB AND JEW . . . . .	211
IV   JOURNEY HOME . . . . .	220

INDEX . . . . .	223
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## INTRODUCTION

WHEN MY WIFE AND I LEFT ENGLAND IN AUGUST, 1940, FOR A LECTURE TOUR IN the United States, we only expected to be away for four months. As events turned out, we were absent four years and visited four Continents.

In view of my lifelong association with the United States, I felt I could make a useful contribution to British-American understanding by trying to explain to America why we had gone to war. Two years earlier my wife and I had spent seven months, also lecturing, in Canada and the United States. I had then been deeply concerned by the strength of American Isolationism, and by the prevalent belief that when Hitler made his bid for the dictatorship of Europe, the United States could remain a mere spectator. My American friends were, I feared, entirely under-estimating the Nazi menace.

Naturally I understood their desire to keep out of European entanglements; nevertheless, I was convinced that they were burying their heads in the sand. The fundamental issue was Hitler's challenge throughout the world to the Anglo-Saxon way of life.

In the summer of 1939 we had visited many of the countries in Central Europe, and when in Germany we had felt as if we were on the brink of a volcano about to erupt. This final survey enabled me to give American audiences a living picture of the Nazi menace, based on first-hand impressions during those memorable weeks before the outbreak of the war.

At the completion of a 17,000-mile tour of the then neutral United States in 1940-1941, I felt a visit to India in war-time would round off my experiences and be extremely useful. The Indian problem was certainly not understood in the United States, and for the most part America, as I had observed at first hand, relied for its information concerning British rule in India on representatives of the Congress Party.

Ever since the days of the Round Table Conferences, when I was Editor of the *Spectator*, I have taken a deep interest in India's progress towards responsible government. Even then I had met most of the Indian leaders and I was one of the earliest advocates in Great Britain of Dominion Status.

I arrived in India, therefore, a firm believer in the desirability of India becoming a free State within the British Commonwealth, at the earliest possible moment. My studies of the constitutional problem on the spot taught me, however, that India was not a unit, and that any attempt to establish a unified and strongly centralised Government, until the grievances of the minorities had been removed, was destined to fail. In order to avoid civil strife there was, it seemed to me, only one course to pursue—the right of Muslim India to freedom must be admitted, as indeed the right of any minority with a clearly defined ethos. A great opportunity of helping forward humanity lies before the British Commonwealth. Within its orbit, as Dominions under the Crown, the peoples

of India should be able to work out their own salvation, protected from external aggression, at sea, on land and in the air.

This is the day of large national groups. Once the chief sections of the country have attained freedom and equality within the Commonwealth, like Canada, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand, it should be possible to evolve some form of confederation of all the component parts. The vital role of the British Commonwealth will be to ensure that the birth-throes of the various Indian "nations" shall take place in a sub-continent at peace within, and guaranteed against aggression from without. The supremacy of the British Navy in the nineteenth century enabled the United States, and the republics of South America, to concentrate their energies on internal development, without fear of attack from across the seas. In the twentieth century the forces of the British Commonwealth can play a similar role in Asia.

On the way to India we were fortunate enough to be able to spend three months in Australia and New Zealand and thereby fill in gaps in our picture of a world at war.

All my life I have believed in the mission of the British Commonwealth, and in the supreme importance to civilisation of a close understanding between the American and British Commonwealths. Our four years' wanderings during these immortal years have confirmed and strengthened these beliefs. When Lord Linlithgow, then Viceroy, invited me in May, 1942, to become America Relations Officer to the Government of India, I gladly availed myself of an opportunity of working for a cause so near my heart.

Two years later, on our way home, we spent ten weeks in the Middle East which enabled me, among other things, to revisit Palestine, and bring up to date my knowledge of the baffling Arab-Jew problem.

Our visits to Japan, Italy and Germany, in the three pre-war years, were a painful but very valuable experience, in that they enabled me to realise the identity of outlook of the three Fascist Governments.

The purpose of this book is to try and give a faithful picture of what I have seen, and to share some of the lessons that I have learnt. These are:

- (1) Every country refuses to face facts, and tries to keep out of war as long as it can.
- (2) No country is strong enough to stand alone.
- (3) The British Commonwealth and Empire is an essential buttress of civilisation.
- (4) The first step towards the ultimate goal of world unity—is British-American co-operation.

Every word in *Immortal Years*, and in the diary upon which it is based, has been taken down from dictation direct on her typewriter by my wife, to whom this book is dedicated.

EVELYN WRENCH.

London.

1st November, 1944.

## PART ONE

### PRELUDE

#### I

THE STORY BEGINS ON 19TH MAY, 1937, A PERFECT SPRING DAY—STEAMING DOWN the Solent, on the eve of the Spithead Review. The Coronation ceremonies had just taken place. Statesmen from all parts of the British Commonwealth had gathered in London, to pay their homage to the new King and Queen. The festivities and the wonderful outburst of loyalty to the Crown, had helped people to forget the recent ominous events in Europe. There was a large and especially welcome contingent of visitors from the United States. The glass was set fair, provided the two great English-speaking Commonwealths acted in unison. In that happy event even Hitler could not upset the even tenor of our lives. Nazis might goose-step on their parade grounds; Mussolini might harangue Fascist crowds from the Palazzo Venezia; but there was something which the Axis Dictators could not command—the spontaneous devotion of Free Nations around the Seven Seas.

It was in a mood of exhilaration my wife and I steamed slowly past the embattled might of Britain's sea-power. From countless ships the White Ensign fluttered in the breeze. Despite the cheese-paring policy of former British Governments, the fleet was formidable. The ships of other Naval Powers were moored alongside the vessels of the Royal Navy. It was good to see the friendly flags of the United States and France. The Nazi Swastika, the Italian flag, the Soviet Sickle and Hammer, and the Rising Sun of Japan were proof that the Totalitarian States were ready to pay their tribute to Britannia. Now that Axis ambitions were satisfied on the Continent were we not entitled to hope that Europe was about to enter on a long period of peace? Perhaps, after all, despite the pessimists, Teuton and Slav could live in amity side by side.

Soviet Russia, engrossed in problems of internal development, had no time for aggression. I recalled a talk with the former Soviet Ambassador in London, Monsieur Sokolnikoff, who had said that of one thing Europe could be assured, Soviet Russia, involved in vast tasks of industrial development, would pursue a policy of peace, if left alone by her neighbours. He said the one stable factor that could be relied on was that Russia would defend herself if attacked, as she had done in 1812.

A few hours after our steamer had berthed at Quebec we lunched at the Citadel with Lord and Lady Tweedsmuir. John Buchan, as I always think of him, was a friend of over thirty years' standing, and one of the earliest supporters of the English-Speaking Union. After a prolonged absence from North America, it was useful at the outset of our tour to have his sane summary of current events. His sojourn in Canada had only strengthened his enthusiasm for the cause of British-American understanding. Among the happiest influences in his Governor-Generalship was his friendship with Mr. Roosevelt, who shared so many of his own beliefs. We discussed a problem which was in all minds—the possibility of further aggression on the part of Germany, Italy and Japan. Buchan had complete confidence that whatever troublous times might lie ahead, we could



rely on close and friendly co-operation on the part of the American administration, though he was fully aware of the strength of isolationism.

I had known Canada intimately during the first dozen years of the present century. It was then confident in its destiny; the Dominion could regard with satisfaction a great annual influx of immigrants, its rapidly developing railroads, and the soaring of real estate values. The Canada I now found was in a chastened mood. There was a growing cleavage between the French and English-speaking elements; the old question of the rights of the Provinces versus the Central Government had become acute.

## II

We had planned a trip to Alaska before undertaking a lecture tour in the United States when we suddenly changed our minds. The *Empress of Canada*, alongside the wharf at Vancouver, was due to sail for China and Japan in two days' time, and this was an opportunity not to be missed. The political horizon in the Far East was unsettled, and a rapid survey of Sino-Japanese problems on the spot would be a useful preparation for our tour. Within forty-eight hours we were on our way to Honolulu and the changing East.

The curtain of the Far Eastern Drama went up for us as we looked from the ship on the crowded quay at Honolulu. Chinese mothers with stoical self-control were taking leave of their sons, setting forth to fight for their country against Japan. Paper streamers, the last links between the Chinese families and their young men on board, snapped asunder as the ship glided out to sea. One day out the radio reported further warlike moves, and when we arrived in Yokohama the "Sino-Japanese 'affair'" was well under way. A tense atmosphere prevailed as we drove from Yokohama to Tokyo, and we witnessed the stirring scenes which take place when a modern nation mobilises its man-power for war. In memory I was back again in Paris at the beginning of August, 1914. The populace of Tokyo was in the first flush of enthusiasm; at street corners sturdy Japanese recruits were being acclaimed by their womenfolk, and farewells and cheers filled the air. Lorries full of soldiers, with banners flying, were dashing down the streets, while the men shouted "banzai" and war slogans, and waved their hands.

As we travelled to Osaka and Kobe we witnessed similar scenes as troop trains passed through the railway stations. The Emperor, the "Father of the Nation," had issued his commands, and his subjects were obeying. The Japanese populace was war-minded and the Empire of the Rising Sun, with seventy years of unbroken success behind it, was going to do in eastern Asia what Germany was achieving in Europe. This was no time for Anti-Fascists to visit Japan. A momentous chapter in the dream of Japanese domination over the Far East was opening, and nothing could stop her from accomplishing her manifest destiny as Overlord of the East. The day of the white man's sovereignty was passing and the British Empire and Russia were in bad favour; America's turn would come next.

I had watched the upward surge of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, so I was soon convinced that Japan was whole-heartedly totalitarian in its outlook and an enthusiastic believer in the doctrine of the super-state. Japan, in fact,

was being swept by a wave of national intoxication reminiscent of the early days of Hitlerism in Germany. Small wonder that the relations between Germany, Italy and Japan were growing closer. Ever since Japan's resignation from the League of Nations at Geneva, invisible barriers were growing up between her and the Anglo-Saxon Powers. Hitler would have felt very much at home in Tokyo. British nineteenth-century Liberalism was completely at a discount, for the dominating factor in Japan was the deification of the State, as symbolised in the worship of its Emperor.

We went several times to the Meiji Park in Tokyo, sacred to the memory of the great Mutsuhito, the hundred and third Mikado, whose reign, from 1867-1912, is known as Meiji, the era of "enlightened rule." The Imperial family occupies a unique position, as the Japanese believe that their ruler is in direct descent, unbroken from time immemorial, from the Sun Goddess, the mythical parent of the reigning family. Japanese devotion to the throne was a counterpart to the unquestioning devotion of the young Nazi to Hitler. In the space of a quarter of a century Japan, a cloistered island, living in the middle ages, adopted Western methods, and emerged as a World Power, after the defeat of China in 1894. Ten years later she had focused world attention once again on her dynamic power by her defeat of Tsarist Russia.

We watched Japanese recruits standing silently on the steps of the Temple, dedicated to the memory of their dead Emperor; without any signs of self-consciousness they were saying their prayers before leaving for the front. Had we been able to look into their minds, we should probably have found that they were praying, not for their own safety, but for their nation's cause, a motive for which they would readily die. There are moments in the life of nations when the observer is engulfed in waves of psychic force; I can count upon the fingers of one hand the occasions on which I have been a reluctant participant in such manifestations. In the early days of Nazism I watched Hitler and Goebbels explaining the ethics of National Socialism to a large audience of journalists in Berlin. To be at Tokyo in the summer of 1937 was a similar psychic experience; Japanese "soul-force," an all-pervading element, seeped into my consciousness. Japan had started on a great adventure and no power on earth could effectually intervene.

In the gardens there were peeps into dainty fairy-like interiors of summer houses where "ceremonial teas" were taking place, and little women, looking as if they were figures from Japanese fans come to life, were flitting to and fro. In the gardens were diminutive bridges over tiny lakes, flanked by dwarf trees; over the lotus-ponds large dragonflies hovered in the sunshine—this was the Japan of one's dreams. How much longer would this Japan withstand the rush of modernism and twentieth-century industrialism? I wished I had visited Japan at the turn of the century, for modern Nippon, its countryside covered with factories, its enormous departmental stores, and its slave-like imitation of the West, was utterly depressing. On the journey from Tokyo to Kobe one was hardly ever out of sight of some factory or other, for in this way every square yard of land was being utilised. How was it possible for eighty million people immured in their small island kingdom to make a living? Japanese leaders cast longing eyes on "empty" territories across the seas, as destinations for their emigrants, though as a matter of fact the Japanese had shown but little inclination to settle in Manchukuo.

If the Western visitor wanted to get an overwhelming sense of the difference between the Japanese and Western outlooks on life, he could not have done better, at the outset of his stay in Tokyo, than to visit the Nogi Shrine, where the house of General Nogi is preserved as a National Monument, "to encourage loyalty in future generations." General Nogi was one of the most successful leaders of modern Japan, having fought with distinction in the war against China and Russia. The visitor was not allowed inside the building, but stood on a platform outside and looked through the large windows into rooms where a dramatic event had been enacted. When the funeral procession of the Emperor Meiji was being assembled, before making its way through the capital, the absence of General Nogi was detected. A messenger was sent to his house, when it was found that the old warrior and his wife had committed suicide in their living-room, so that "the general might follow his Master to the celestial regions." He left this message to explain his action: "My Lord, the Emperor, having left this world, I yearn but to follow him."<sup>1</sup>

British political investigators were not welcome at the Japanese Foreign Office in 1937, although they were received with customary politeness. In response to the question whether Japan was in favour of a collective system to preserve world peace, I was informed that a written reply would be sent. I had explained that I was anxious, for my lecture tour in America, to be in an authoritative position to answer questions concerning Japanese foreign policy, but no reply ever came. Japan's leaders were hypnotised by Hitler's fantastic uprush to the virtual dictatorship of continental Europe; and her statesmen regarded with contempt the timid idealism of the Anglo-Saxon Powers. The future belonged to the virile nations, not to the Democracies. If Japan organised her man-power on a totalitarian basis she would certainly cause much trouble in the world; small wonder that far-sighted statesmen in the United States gazed with apprehension across the Pacific.

English-speaking leaders on both sides of the Atlantic might lecture the Japanese for their misdeeds in Manchukuo; but our industrialists were ready enough to book orders from Japan. Large consignments of iron ore, discarded motor-cars, oil and rubber were sold by the Anglo-Saxons with alacrity. In the vestibule of the Imperial Hotel at Tokyo I watched the emissaries of "big business" discussing future contracts with their Japanese customers. Realists with a lifelong knowledge of Japan, were convinced that Japan's aim was nothing less than world domination. It was difficult to recall that this forceful and unfriendly nation had been our Ally fourteen years before. There were certainly no signs of our ancient friendship; the Japanese no doubt resented the fact that Great Britain had advocated the abrogation of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty in deference to American and Dominion opinion. We were not sorry to say good-bye to Japan.

On a stifling August day we awoke to find ourselves at anchor off Woosung on the Yangtse, sixteen miles from Shanghai. For two days on the sweltering decks of our steamer we watched Japanese planes bomb the outskirts of Shanghai, and saw villages go up in flames. Japan had undisputed command of the air and of the sea, and Japanese destroyers darted to and fro without meeting the least resistance. How long would China be able to withstand the might of the Rising Sun? The pilot of our steamer said China could not hold out for more

<sup>1</sup> For account see *Tell Me About Tokyo*, G. Gaiger Hokuseido, Press, Tokyo.

than a month. The main object of our halt at Woosung was to evacuate 1,200 Chinese British subjects who were returning to Hongkong. There was surely never a more orderly shipload of refugees. Twelve hundred mattresses were placed on the decks and in the public lounges; Chinese matrons, their black hair neatly plastered to their heads, sat sedately on the floor, surrounded by their families and household goods. Chinese maidens, speaking excellent English, lay on their mattresses on deck reading popular American magazines. Hollywood had given them the taste for sex drama, and among the titles of the stories in which they were engrossed I noted in my diary were "Three Men in Her Life" and "Her Husband Would Never Know!"

Hongkong is undoubtedly one of the most valuable and beautiful harbours in the world, and in pre-war years it was sad to think that, in the event of war in the Far East, Great Britain would probably not be able to defend it. Singapore was the pivot on which the whole British Far Eastern Defence Plan depended. At Hongkong, although there was deep sympathy for the Chinese, it was feared that the Japanese would achieve their immediate objectives before the end of the year.

A few days later I watched the students of Manila University drilling on the Campus. I asked a Filipino: "Do you think your country will be able to defend itself against Japan?" Without hesitation came the reply: "We could never stand up to Japan by ourselves, but the United States will protect us."

### III

In the autumn of 1937 Americans were looking anxiously towards the Orient, the Japanese menace was not underestimated. First-hand accounts of the gathering storm were eagerly listened to. Despite Japanese aggression, American public opinion hoped against hope that the United States would be able to keep out of the trouble. American writers were busily engaged explaining to the public that the right policy for the United States was to develop the prosperity of the Americas to the utmost, and avoid entanglements abroad. The Isolationists had a large following. There was a widespread belief that crafty British propagandists, in association with American bankers and industrialists, had dragged the United States into the war in 1917. Books, such as Quincy Howe's *England Expects Every American to do His Duty*, met with large sales, for in its pages the English-speaking Union was portrayed as part of the great subterranean propaganda campaign, fostered by the Carnegie millions. Many thoughtful Americans, however, regarded the future with dismay, and were persuaded of the urgent need for the utmost frankness in British-American relations.

In Mr. Cordell Hull I found a political leader with a complete realisation of the dangers of the European situation, and of the impossibility of a World Power, such as the United States, living in a state of Isolationism behind high tariff walls. Mr. Roosevelt made his great quarantine speech at Chicago in October, 1937, which was a warning to aggressors. In it the President declared that such were the solidarity and interdependence of the modern world both technically and morally, that it was impossible for any nation to isolate itself completely from economic and political upheavals in the outside world. It was not easy to form a correct estimate of the strength of the President's following; he undoubtedly

had powerful enemies, and among audiences of the well-to-do the majority seemed opposed to him. The bitterness of the criticism of Mr. Roosevelt reminded me of the hostility evinced towards Mr. Woodrow Wilson in 1920. The members of the ordinary public with whom we came into contact, on the other hand, such as waiters, bell-boys, hairdressers, train conductors and taxi-drivers, were enthusiastic supporters of Mr. Roosevelt. Also in University circles there was much admiration for the President. The programme of Public Works carried out by the Administration was most impressive. In Great Britain vast sums had been spent in unemployment relief, but we had nothing to show for our expenditure; whereas America could point with pride to great achievements, such as the construction of bridges, boulevards, dams, and schemes of afforestation.

In January, 1938, I had the opportunity of attending one of Mr. Roosevelt's weekly Press Conferences, it was a wonderful experience. A fellow journalist obtained the necessary permit and went with me to the White House. Seventy or eighty Washington correspondents, among whom were a few women, waited outside a large door. At the appointed moment we surged into the President's study and I found myself within three or four yards of Mr. Roosevelt who was sitting at his large desk, with a secretary by his side. A red rope divided the journalists from the President, but they appeared to be completely at home, and whatever their political views might be, all those whom I met were great admirers of Mr. Roosevelt's informality and accessibility, his good humour, his adroitness under fire and, above all, consummate dignity. The meeting was the most impressive demonstration of the functioning of democratic institutions that I have ever witnessed. This particular conference lasted an hour and never once was the President at a loss for an answer, no matter how technical the question, and it was a great mental achievement. If Mr. Roosevelt wished to be evasive he headed the enquirer off with a smile. "Mr. President, what are you going to say to the Mayor of Chicago when he comes to see you to-day?" was one of the many queries put, to which came the answer in a flash: "If you will tell what the Mayor of Chicago is going to say to me I will answer your question." If I had to say in one sentence what was the feature of current American political life that I admire most, I would reply the weekly Press Conference, when the Washington correspondents have an opportunity of asking the Head of the State any question that occurs to them.

Wherever I went I was struck with the accessibility of the leaders of universities, industry, journalism or indeed any field of endeavour—a feature of the American way of life that had impressed me deeply as a young man thirty years previously. The talks with American University Presidents, newspaper owners, and writers were very stimulating—none more so than an afternoon spent with Mr. Henry Ford at the Dearborn Recreation Centre. We had expected to find the great man sitting in an office, guarded by a staff of secretaries in an ante-room. Instead of that an assistant conducted us into a large apartment, on the first floor, in which eight couples were carefully practising the steps of an old English dance. Reclining on a sofa, against the wall, was Henry Ford; thoroughly relaxed, his legs stretched out. We had only expected a short audience with the busy autocrat who controlled the vast and world-wide Ford enterprise; instead we found a genial human being who appeared to have no other purpose in life but to discuss world events with two British visitors. The

couples were members of his staff, who were learning old-world dances from an English dancing professor and his wife, both of them engaged in assisting Mr. Ford in his campaign to stimulate interest in classic dancing as an antidote to jazz, which he abhorred. As we watched the evolutions of the dancers we discussed the state of Europe, the problem of "Back to the Land," the production of tractors on a mass scale, and British-American relations. In addition, Mr. Ford talked at length on reincarnation!

It was a privilege to be allowed to peep into Mr. Ford's plans for providing mechanical help for the small man on the farm at popular prices. While we were talking I felt that although Mr. Ford was giving full attention to the topics under discussion, behind those far-seeing eyes a very active brain was vigorously at work. His assistant, on the way out, agreed with me and said that Mr. Ford's subconscious mind was always busy thinking out new developments. When we came to deal with international problems I felt that Mr. Ford was indulging in wishful thinking. He dismissed Europe's problems, for instance, with the remark that "Europe will find a way out of its difficulties, and all will be well"—a vein of optimism which I certainly did not share. Several times I tried to lead the conversation back to Europe's difficulties, but Mr. Ford seemed to have lost interest in the theme, and I had to follow his amazing mind into the realm where he is such an expert. He told us of his policy of establishing small-town industries, which provide winter employment for rural workers and supply his central undertaking with some of the thousands of parts required in the modern automotive industry.

I returned to Europe at the end of January, 1938, after eight months' travel in all parts of Canada and the United States, and remained more than ever convinced that the only hope of establishing a sane world lay in ever closer co-operation between the United States and the free and equal partner States of the British Commonwealth. I had in no wise lost my belief in the ultimate objective of world unity, but the bitter experience gained in attempting to further international co-operation in Europe in the previous decade had taught me one salutary lesson. Idealists might wax eloquent about the brotherhood of man, but unless the new international order was underwritten by the two English-speaking Commonwealths no headway would be made.

#### IV

No one who lived through the weeks leading up to the Munich discussions in Great Britain will ever forget them. Czechoslovakia occupied the centre of the stage, and the problems of the Sudeten Germans suddenly became the personal concern of every Englishman. The appeasers were busy and German propaganda was cleverly "dished up" to the British public. Alas, Thomas Masaryk was not alive to speak for his country with the great authority that he alone possessed. There was much to be said for the German point of view. If Germans in Czechoslovakia, representing so important an element in the Czechoslovak State, wished to have a special relationship with Germany, who was to say to them nay? The Czechs should be reasonable and make a settlement with Germany. After all, Great Britain, unlike France, had given no guarantee, and was under no obligation to come to Czechoslovakia's aid. Arguments such as

these were used in the British Press, and for the time being the appeasers had their way. We lived in a world of rumour and counter-rumour. Mr. Chamberlain's flights to Germany at his age won universal admiration.

On 30th September came the news that the Four-Power Conference in Munich had been successful and agreement reached by France, Germany, Italy, and Great Britain. Mr. Chamberlain arrived back in London on 30th September, 1938, with his message of "Peace with honour," and was welcomed at Heston with delirious acclamation.

Catastrophe had been averted, we breathed again.

V

A few months later my wife and I were heading eastwards through the Mediterranean. At Gibraltar we watched the first Bren guns being put into position. Britain would not be caught napping a second time. On the way to Malta we were electrified by the news that Britain had given a formal guarantee to come to the aid of Poland and Rumania if their independence were threatened. Hitler had torn up the Munich Pact by his seizure of Czechoslovakia. At long last Britain was awake; it was the end of appeasement. We were proud of Britain's role as the defender of small nations.

At Malta we dropped a group of naval personnel. Maltese friends talked of the narrow shave of last September, when the island was practically defenceless against air attack from Italian soil. It was widely believed that Mussolini had done his utmost to get Italy into the war in September, 1938, but the King and the Vatican had been resolute in their opposition. A few days later we passed through the Suez Canal, and Egypt seemed in confident mood. The inhabitants welcomed the preparations being made by Great Britain; Italy was not popular in the Eastern Mediterranean. At Port Said we passed an Italian transport with soldiers returning from Abyssinia, and some of our passengers shook their fists at them.

Six weeks later we returned from India, as I was taken seriously ill in Bombay with pneumonia, and we were obliged to relinquish our lecture tour in Australia and New Zealand. We arrived back at Marseilles on 9th May, 1939, and after my few weeks of convalescence we spent the next four months visiting the storm centre of Europe.<sup>1</sup> Our object was to ascertain on the spot whether there was still any common ground between the Western Democracies and the Totalitarian States. We little thought we were taking farewell of the Europe which we had known. This final picture of Italy, Germany, Poland and Russia was invaluable in clarifying my ideas as to the events that led to Armageddon. There was no possibility of accommodation with Nazi Germany. Hitler's mind was made up, he only awaited the moment to launch his bid for world mastery.

To one who had spent many years working for international co-operation in close association with sincere colleagues inspired by like ideals, in both Germany and Italy, the summer immediately before the outbreak of the war will always be a poignant memory. Italy, hitherto bound to Great Britain by ties of ancient friendship, was now—officially at least—a hostile country. Its Government-

<sup>1</sup> A full account of Europe in the summer of 1939 is given in my book, *I Loved Germany*, published in 1940 by Michael Joseph, London.

controlled Press poured out hymns of hate against the British Commonwealth. The slap given by a Japanese sentry to an Englishman was gleefully extolled as a great event. Italian friends apologised for their Government and their Press, and when beyond the range of Fascist ears they opened their hearts. They insisted that their feelings for Great Britain remained unchanged, but they were convinced that war was inevitable and that they would be dragged into it by their German partners, whom they cordially detested.

In Germany we had a sense of foreboding. The nation appeared to be completely mobilised, and it was evident that only a miracle could prevent the outbreak of war. The contrast between French and German preparedness was fantastic. When would the volcano erupt? that was the question. Early in July I took counsel with a German friend in an important position, as to when he thought the break would come, and how long we should remain in the country. I shall never forget his reply: "We are ruled by a mad genius, but remember he *is* a genius. No one knows what he will do, and the terrible thing is that he himself does not know what he will do; his actions depend on his 'inner voices.' Of one thing you can be certain—war is inevitable. Get back to England by the first of September." We made our plans accordingly and after visiting Moscow, Warsaw, Danzig, Copenhagen, and Stockholm, sailed from Gothenburg in Sweden on the 26th August. Our steamer was crowded with returning British holiday-makers and French reservists summoned to the Colours. We arrived at Tilbury on 28th August. My neighbour in the dining-saloon was a Czech, then residing in England; he had been on a business mission to Sweden. He was still an optimist and was willing to bet that he would be returning to Gothenburg at the end of the week, when the crisis had blown over!

Two days later I took part in a conference in London concerned with the making of plans in the event of war. There was no real appreciation of the terrific war machine which Germany had built up, so it was no time for easy optimism. I was asked: "Do you think Hitler is in earnest?" I thought of the armed Germany I had just seen, of the fanatical young Nazi Storm Troopers with whom I had talked, less than three weeks before in Danzig. I was convinced that Hitler controlled the greatest war machine in Europe; the services of every individual in the Third Reich were harnessed to the State. The cauldron was on the boil and its overflow was simply a matter of days.

## VI

The preacher at St. Paul's, Brighton, was in the midst of his sermon on Sunday morning, 3rd September, 1939. Suddenly we heard the sirens and immediately there was an electric atmosphere. The Priest asked the congregation to remain seated, he said that he did not think the sirens signified that there was an air raid, but that they were intended to inform the public that we were at war with Germany, the Government's time-limit having expired. The sermon continued as if nothing exceptional had taken place, I admired the preacher's *sang-froid*; he remained entirely absorbed in his theme, and this made an impressive object lesson in self-control. When we emerged from church, newspaper boys were running up and down the streets, selling special editions of the Sunday newspapers.



Great Britain had been at war with Germany since eleven-fifteen o'clock.

We went into the Metropole Hotel; excited crowds had gathered to hear the News Bulletin. We listened to Mr. Chamberlain's momentous utterance, informing the world at large, that the British Government was implementing its promise to Poland. The diary which I kept during the first year of the war was burnt when my office in Overseas House, overlooking the Green Park, was destroyed by incendiary bombs during the night of 16th April, 1941, so it is not possible for me to recapture those first war hours from a record written at the time. I do not think anyone who went through the first year of the war in England, would wish to be without that experience. It was impossible not to admire the nation's spirit in face of the tidings of disaster upon disaster. First came the long period of waiting during the winter months for the spring campaign to start; then the series of calamities that took place in quick succession; the expedition to Norway and deeds of unavailing heroism to retrieve the situation; the collapse of Denmark, the Nazi invasion of Holland and Belgium, the immortal epic of Dunkirk, the great pride that was in our hearts as we learnt of that amazing evacuation, the downfall of France, followed on 10th June by Italy's "stab in the back," and finally the Franco-German Armistice, concluded on 12th June. Through all those weeks of crisis upon crisis, Mr. Churchill, who had succeeded Mr. Chamberlain as Prime Minister on 2nd May, dogged and determined, the heaven-sent leader of that little island, the heart of the Empire, gave the British Peoples supreme leadership in the hour of dire need.

After the Franco-German Armistice came weeks of waiting, and wondering when the Nazi hordes, lining the coast of Europe from Narvik to the Spanish frontier, would swarm down upon us from the skies. There were rumours of German parachutists being rounded up in the home counties; every week we expected invasion. At times we almost wished Hitler would attack—anything would surely be better than this suspense. London remained imperturbable, however, for nothing could shake the morale of her citizens. On the day that France collapsed I entered a chemist's shop in St. James's Street and said to the man behind the counter: "Well, we have had a bit of a knock to-day." Quickly and almost indignantly he replied: "I don't agree with you, sir; what I say is Thank God we have no more Allies. Now we know where we are."

What could Hitler do with people like that?

## CHAPTER I

### ATLANTIC CROSSING

WE SAILED FROM LIVERPOOL ON THE "DUCHESS OF ATHOLL," ON FRIDAY, 16TH August, 1940, on a four months' lecture tour in Canada and the United States. Acquiring the necessary official permits and documents was a lengthy process. Ocean travellers were left in the dark as to actual sailing dates until the last minute. The Battle of Britain had just started, and we have always regretted that our sailing did not take place a few weeks later, so that we might have been in England for that heart-stirring time. During our last night on British soil, at Liverpool, there were four raids, and we spent most of our time running up and down the broad white marble staircase of the Adelphi Hotel, to the air-raid shelter.

The children on our steamer had been selected from a cross-section of the nation, and the great majority came from homes of comparative poverty.

The parents who had to make the decision were confronted with a difficult choice. For the sake of escaping future dangers, which might never be as great as they feared, they had to send their little families across the Atlantic—in those days a perilous undertaking. As a matter of fact the problem was solved by the sinking of the *City of Benares* two weeks later, when the entire system was discontinued. By mid-September over 5,000 children had been sent to Canada.

There was another aspect of the scheme which appealed strongly to workers in the cause of English-speaking unity; thousands of Canadian and American families, deeply stirred by the events in Europe after Dunkirk, had spontaneously, either individually or in groups, offered to adopt children "for the duration." The evacuees would have the opportunity of getting to know North America and to love its generous-hearted people at an early age; both then and when the time came for them to return to their island home, they were destined to act as little ambassadors of good will. In the first outburst of enthusiasm all the practical difficulties were not fully realised; North American householders cabled to friends to come or to send their children, and the British parents, moved by the offers, accepted with alacrity.

The children for the most part, were going to families in Canada. Several hundred children of British employees of the Kodak Company, Rochester, N.Y., of Warner Brothers, Hollywood, and of the Chase National Bank had been sponsored by these American firms. Other parties going to the United States had been adopted by the *Boston Transcript* and by American Quakers. The small mites belonging to these parties had labels attached proclaiming their destination.

We lived in a "floating playground," and after the first days of inevitable seasickness, the youngsters ran wild and had the time of their lives; yet Providence must have taken a special interest in their welfare for the most serious casualty of the trip was a broken leg. The children climbed up the rigging, they got in and out of lifeboats, they jumped down the companion ladders. The more adventurous pulled themselves up the steel cables attached to the funnels, and

some boys caused temporary excitement by turning on a hose and deluging their neighbours. On one occasion I looked up and saw a small boy of five sitting on the gunwale, one leg dangling over the sea.

The good temper of the officers and crew was remarkable. They accepted the pandemonium as part of the day's work, but we sympathised with officers who had been on night duty, and who had difficulty in sleeping during the day with a miniature Hampstead Heath on a Bank Holiday outside their cabins. The grown-ups had their work cut out, but recognised that they were confronted with nothing more serious than sheer animal spirits and an absence of adequate supervision. The head official responsible for the welfare of the evacuees agreed with me that the system needed tightening up. We perceived that a little forethought would surely have evolved a plan of control by the elder children, who could have been responsible for the good behaviour of different sections of the deck; and there must have been many Scouts and Girl Guides whose experience might have been so utilised. A great opportunity was missed of telling the children something of the countries to which they were going, in addition to finding an outlet for their surplus energy. When the coast of the American continent first came into view, I overheard two boys arguing as to their destination, one of them said: "We are going to Canada." To which his companion replied: "No, we ain't; we are going to America."

The one law, which was universally observed, was the rule that no child must ever be parted from its lifebelt; little atoms tried to drag after them lifebelts nearly as large as themselves. While we were still in the submarine area the grown-ups went through an anxious time, for we were not sailing in convoy. Our ship and a vessel bound for South Africa, did the first 500 miles in company, escorted by one destroyer only, and for the first 24 hours a naval plane circled above us. As we left England the ship's barber remarked to me that we ought to pray for rough weather and fogs if we wished to be safe from submarines; if he followed his own advice his prayers were certainly answered for I never remember a foggier transatlantic crossing. While we were at dinner the second night, the whole ship "shuddered" repeatedly and there were loud explosions, caused by the dropping of depth charges by our naval escort, as submarines were in the neighbourhood.

The wireless played a great part in our lives. Two days out we switched over from the ordinary B.B.C. Bulletins to the Empire News Service. London had its first heavy raid the night we left, and the passengers listened with anxious hearts to the news of the bombing of Croydon and the south-eastern area. When the news of the shooting down of 140 planes came through, a murmur of applause ran round the saloon, for it was definite proof that London's defences were much more formidable than they had been a few months earlier.

The last day of the voyage was one of sunshine and sparkling seas. The passing of small craft on the way up the St. Lawrence was an exciting moment for the children, as we had seen no vessels during the crossing. Some of the children were evidently disappointed in their first sight of the American continent. "I thought America was going to be very big, rising high out of the sea," said one small girl, who doubtless expressed the views of some of her friends. For the grown-ups one outstanding memory of the voyage was watching the twinkling lights of a Canadian town; they showed that after a year of black-out we were in a country free from the fear of night raids.

On the landing stage at Quebec soldiers with bayonets were doing sentry duty—a strange sight in the new world. There was a great change in the Canada of 1940, compared with three years before, when public opinion was concentrated on the parish pump. The French-Canadian driver of our car, with whom we discussed the collapse of France, said: "After all, France has nothing to say to us, we are British subjects. As for Hitler, we shall get him yet."

At Montreal railway station we had our last sight of the British children. Two large parties were met there by the American receptionists, who accompanied them to their various destinations in the United States; and during the next eight months we occasionally met small groups who appeared to have entirely adjusted themselves to their new environment. We heard of no instances of failure, except in a few cases where the children were accompanied by their mothers. It was more difficult for grown-ups whose heartstrings were pulling them back to Europe, to become accustomed to an entirely new life.

The headquarters of the evacuation scheme at Ottawa were organised most efficiently. Elaborate statistics concerning each child were kept on file; a humanly-worded letter was sent to the parents in Great Britain recording the safe arrival of the evacuees. Each foster-parent in Canada received detailed information explaining the idiosyncrasies of every child, as provided by the authorities in Great Britain. Nothing was left to chance. It was a remarkable demonstration of bureaucracy at its best.

## CHAPTER II

### WAR-TIME CANADA

TO CHANGE FROM LIFE IN GREAT BRITAIN, IN A MOOD OF GRIM DETERMINATION, keyed up to face the greatest peril in its history, to the calm and neutral atmosphere of the United States was for us a contrast of extremes. But we had benefited by a stay in Canada for several weeks before seeking to interpret the British war aims and outlook to American audiences. It enabled us to adjust ourselves to North American conditions, albeit in Canada—a valued ally in the great crusade against the Nazi bid for world domination.

There was no doubt as to Canada's determination to play a leading part in the struggle. The creation of the British Empire Air Training Plan was a striking achievement, and was to prove one of the major contributing factors to ultimate victory. The vast resources of Canadian industry were being mobilised, the Canadian Navy was expanding rapidly, and Canada was in process of becoming an important sea-power.

The Press of Canada as a whole gave loyal support to the Canadian war policy, but the Government had to step warily as far as French Canada was concerned. French Canada was in no mood to agree to the introduction of conscription for overseas service. French Canadians were still bewildered by the fall of France, and they had not yet orientated their minds to the rapidly changing circumstances involved in a Europe dominated by Hitler. A distinguished French-Canadian journalist put into words what one section of Quebec Province was thinking: "While French Canada appreciates to the full the benefits it has enjoyed under the British Crown, we sometimes ask ourselves whether

our association with the British Commonwealth is not becoming too costly, with two world wars within twenty-five years! We look southwards, across the international border, and watch with envy the great American Republic, which has stayed out of the conflict, and, judging by present indications, shows no intention of going to war." I have often wondered what my friend thought after Pearl Harbour, and whether he now realises how great is the interdependence of nations in the modern world.

In order to understand conditions in Canada and to form a just estimate of public opinion, it was salutary to recall British mentality at the time of Munich. If we in Great Britain were naturally aroused it was partly because we had been expecting invasion at any moment after Dunkirk. After all, only 21 miles of water separated our people from Nazi-controlled France, whereas in the case of Canada there were 3,000 miles of Atlantic separating her from Europe's battlefields. Canadian homes were inviolate; as long as the Royal Navy was supreme the worst that Canada might expect would be the visit of an occasional Axis submarine to her shores, with haphazard shelling by its guns. Canada also had the consoling knowledge that the Navy of the United States would not stand idly by if Canadian territory were attacked.

It would hardly have been possible to meet a greater change of environment within a week, than that involved in going straight from London to the Seignior Club, Monte Bello, seventy miles from Montreal, whither we had come for a week's rest. We had suddenly jumped back into the pre-war world. This luxurious country club was situated in a great tract of lake and forest, kept as a game preserve. The smallest whim of the well-to-do visitor was studied and fulfilled. There were evening concerts, and on the night of our arrival a parade of Canadian furs took place, displayed by mannequins from Montreal.

We woke up to brilliant sunshine and found that our bedroom looked out on flowered lawns leading down to a lake. The club was a mixture of a smart American country club and an hotel on the Riviera. The majority of the guests came from the United States. Girls attired in faultlessly cut breeches and top boots, who had just emerged from the ministrations of the club hairdresser, were going out for their daily hour of "horse-back riding." Small girls of five or six in jodhpurs also went riding with their elders, and they, too, paid frequent visits to the beauty parlour. At the landing-stage at the foot of the garden was moored a motor launch upholstered in sapphire blue, whose owner wore a sapphire blue suit to match, while his wife was dressed in buttercup yellow. They were entertaining guests with the sipping of cocktails; it was like watching the opening scene of a film.

The complete lack of interest in the war was, or so it seemed to us, surprising. During the first three days of our stay we never heard the war referred to; not a single individual inquired about life in Great Britain, nor did we hear any reference to Canada's war effort.

A diplomatic friend gave us advance information of the proposed transfer to Great Britain of the fifty over-age destroyers by the United States Government, at a moment when we were in desperate need of more naval craft for convoy work. A few days later the joyful news appeared in the Press, stating that the transfer had been effected, and that in return Great Britain had agreed to lease to the United States sites for air and naval bases in the Bahamas, Jamaica, St. Lucia, Trinidad, Antigua and British Guiana, besides having given the U.S.A. the right

to build similar bases in Bermuda and Newfoundland. The comment in my diary was as follows: "Unless we are damned fools this transaction should pave the way for even closer co-operation. There has lately been so much unpleasant news that it is good to celebrate the first anniversary of the war with such an astounding development. What is more, the transaction practically means that the British Commonwealth is pooling its defences with the United States in the Western Hemisphere. It is a bitter pill for the Isolationists."

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The two hours' journey from the Seignior Club to Ottawa took us into another world. Men in khaki and Air Force blue were to be seen everywhere, and all of them breathing the true spirit of Canada—a nation at war. Canada was still a human melting-pot, although there had been little immigration from Europe during the previous decade. Every morning our breakfast was brought to us by a representative of a different nationality, French-Canadian, British, Syrian, Roumanian or Ukrainian. The Ukrainian symbolised the process of "Anglo-Saxonisation" which had been going on in Canada since the turn of the century; he had come to Canada with his parents as a boy of nine, and now had three brothers in the Canadian Air Force. In good English, without a trace of foreign accent, he told us his parents still spoke Ukrainian at home.

Bismarck was right when he said that the most significant symptom of the nineteenth century was "the inherited and permanent fact that North America speaks English." Representatives of every European nationality had poured into Canada in the years prior to 1914, and this process of absorption was, of course, only a minor replica of the gradual Americanisation of tens of millions of Europeans, that had taken place in the previous hundred years in the United States. The fact that its population has grown in my lifetime from 50,000,000 to 130,000,000, means that the Anglo-Saxon way of life is now represented by 200,000,000 of the human race.

At the time of Britain's mortal peril in 1940, the rallying of the Dominions to the British cause was a psychological factor of incalculable significance. Although the combined population of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, was only 22,000,000, it did away with the feeling that we in Britain were standing alone. In point of fact, the moral and dynamic value to our cause of finding voluntary allies in our sister nations, was much greater than the mere sum of their populations would indicate. The "war potential" of both Canada and Australia, each owning areas as large as the United States, was immense. How different history might have been if a Hitler, with a lust for world domination, had been born a hundred years earlier! The total strength of the two English-speaking Commonwealths in 1840 in man-power and resources, would have been insignificant compared with that of the present day.

Vast plans for the expansion of the Armed Forces on sea and land and in the air were being developed. The growth of the Royal Canadian Navy was spectacular: at the outbreak of the war Canada's fleet had consisted of fifteen vessels with a personnel of 1,800 officers and men; it now possesses 350 fighting ships and 90,000 men. Canada was also developing a shipbuilding industry.

I had come to Canada to study the establishment and expansion of the British Empire Air Training Plan, a monumental undertaking just nine months old,

but one which, according to the then existing scheme, would be employing over 40,000 individuals by the end of 1941. From the highest official in the Canadian Air Ministry down to the most recently gazetted pilot there was a wonderful *esprit de corps* imbued with great enthusiasm for an undertaking which was destined to play such an important part in equipping the British Commonwealth with the human material needed for the aerial war against the Axis.

At the aerodromes, recruiting stations, and training centres that I visited in Quebec Province and in Ontario, I was told that practically every young Canadian wanted to become a pilot.

Training aerodromes were being constructed right across the continent, and even during the winter were turning out a ceaseless stream of flying personnel. In Eastern Ontario I visited a flying training school with a personnel of 800 already at work, on territory that five months previously had been simply forest and farm. Bulldozers and construction gangs had worked a miracle. From a tower we watched instructors teaching young men in American-built 'planes. The training school had its instructional rooms, machine-gun ranges, a large hospital and operating theatre, a dentist's house, and a photographic building.

In Toronto I visited one of the great manning depots with a personnel of 2,000, where the recently arrived recruits spent their first two weeks and were divided into categories, according to their qualifications, for serving as air crews or ground mechanics. In a large reception room where the raw human material was received, the Commanding Officer went up to a bench on which four hulking young men in civilian clothes were lolling, and when he addressed them they did not move from their seats. In another part of the depot I saw men in uniform after two or three weeks of training, it seemed impossible that they had been transformed into smart and efficient young airmen in so short a period. In the officers' mess it was my privilege to meet several dozen of the American pilots who had recently joined the R.C.A.F., and were about to act as instructors. Some of these airmen had between 10,000 and 20,000 flying hours to their credit. They came chiefly from California and Texas, and among their number were stunt pilots from Hollywood.

Never in the history of aviation surely had so vast an organisation, starting from zero, made such progress in less than a year. The establishment of the Empire Training Plan on Canadian soil was a stroke of genius, for the young men would do their schooling out of range of Nazi bombers, and in Canada's vast spaces the air-minded youths brought over from Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand, would in their tens of thousands work alongside Canadians for six or seven months, getting to know and love the Canadian people and forming links of friendship with their fellows from all over the Commonwealth.

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An evening spent with Mr. Mackenzie King, a very old friend whom I first met in Ottawa in 1906, afforded an opportunity of discussing the happenings of the previous three years, since our last talk in Ottawa in 1937. On that occasion we visited him in the former residence of his late political chief, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, whose mantle had descended on him.

When the Premier wishes to forget office cares, or has some particularly difficult problem to think out, he escapes to his delightful little retreat at

Kingsmere, twenty miles from Ottawa. The property consists of some 400 acres of tree-covered rocky hills, bounded to the north by virgin forest, on a spur of the Laurentians. Kingsmere is an attractive log-house commanding vistas of vast spaces, and on beyond for 1,000 miles, is primeval forest stretching up to the Labrador peninsula and Hudson Bay. A few hundred yards from the house, on a small mound, is a "ruin" built by Mr. King from stones taken from the old Parliament House at Ottawa, burnt down during the last war. Stone carvings from Westminster Abbey have also been added to the shrine, which the Premier regards as an outward symbol of English-speaking unity, the ruling passion of his life.

Mr. Mackenzie King, despite the cares of his office, was in cheerful mood, for he was seeing some of his dreams in process of realisation. He had just returned from the successful conclusion of the Defence Pact between Canada and the United States, resulting from his discussions at Ogdensburg with Mr. Roosevelt. Canadian-American relations were now on a more satisfactory basis than ever before. He also felt that the relations between the British Commonwealth and the United States had been immeasurably strengthened by the agreement between the two Governments in connection with the transfer of the fifty over-age American destroyers to Great Britain in return for the granting of bases to the United States in British Colonies in the Western Hemisphere. It was fortunate at this particular moment of history, when close association between the two great North American countries was inevitable, that the Canadian Premier should happen to be a friend, since Harvard days, of Mr. Roosevelt. We discussed the forthcoming Presidential election, concerning the outcome of which Mr. King had no doubts: he was convinced that Mr. Roosevelt, because of his hold on the American masses, would be elected for a third term.

The Premier said he could not have carried on during the past few years, if it had not been for the ever-present knowledge that in moments of crisis he could withdraw from the world with its insistent claims, and come to grips with his problems in the untrammelled spaces of Kingsmere. Here the daily pin-pricks in the work of a politician sank into their right proportion. The lives of few statesmen have been so affected by their mothers as has that of Mr. King. She had a profound influence on her son and her photograph is to be seen in every room of his home. When we sat down to dinner and Mr. King said grace, it was like stepping back into the days of one's childhood. In these difficult months, the Premier told us, he had found great help in turning to the words of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel, and never once had he doubted that we were fighting for a great moral cause, as did the Hebrew prophets of old.

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Mr. Churchill had an immense hold on Canadian and American audiences. On the day after one of the Prime Minister's utterances a recording of the speech was always given immediately before the lunch hour. The first occasion on which I listened to Mr. Churchill's words in a North American club, was at Montreal. Just as I was entering the main lobby of the University Club, I saw a crowd gathering round the radio, so I joined in and we heard the speech very clearly. In it he discussed the possibility of invasion of Great Britain, and said



that the next ten days would be probably the most fateful in British history. His audience of Montreal professional men was held spellbound.

In many Canadian and American hotels radio sets are provided in the bedrooms as a matter of course—a doubtful blessing at a time when you were almost afraid to listen in. In Toronto we heard of some of the worst raids over London, and when the enemy dropped bombs on Buckingham Palace, this action of the enemy caused great indignation throughout Canada—all the more because in those days the public had not become acclimatised to Totalitarian war. But we also got the cheering news of the great R.A.F. victory and the wonderful bag of 185 Nazi aircraft—a tremendous tonic after the previous cables telling of London's nightmare week. In addition to the straightforward news commentators, North America abounds in news interpreters, who present the day-to-day happenings in a much more dramatic fashion than the announcers of the B.B.C. They certainly appear to suit North American mentality, although during the anxious days of the Battle of Britain we were naturally in no mood for dramatisation.

In September, when a Nazi invasion of Great Britain seemed so imminent, the news bulletins gave us details of a terrible air raid over the London docks, when ninety-nine German machines were destroyed. We tried to get some comfort from the thought that the invasion was not yet taking place, and we agreed that if Hitler wanted to do it that month, while the weather conditions were still favourable, he would have to hurry up. Two weeks later, judging by the Press comment, it appeared as if the tide were now turning decisively against the Axis in the Battle for Britain. I remember that at a gathering of professors in Toronto University a greater feeling of optimism prevailed than I had yet come across, and there was general agreement that Hitler would not attempt invasion for the present, and thus Mr. Churchill's "critical ten days" had definitely passed.

### CHAPTER III

#### BERMUDA, ATLANTIC FORTRESS

OUR INTENTION HAD BEEN TO START OUR LECTURE TOUR IN THE LATTER HALF OF October, but another British lecturer had been getting into hot water with the American Press, and it seemed wiser not to run risks in view of the forthcoming Presidential election. A message from Lord Lothian confirmed me in my resolve to wait until after 4th November. He asked us to come and stay with him at Washington before we set out. We therefore decided to spend the intervening three weeks in Bermuda, where the pressing problem of dollar currency did not arise.

Many Willkie badges were to be seen in the buttonholes of passers-by in Fifth Avenue, and it seemed as if the Republican candidate stood a good chance of winning the election. Some of Mr. Roosevelt's opponents were using the argument that in the event of his return the United States would be at war with the Axis within sixty days. Even with the assistance of the Gallup poll it was difficult to dogmatise as to the opinions of the majority. Just before the

Presidential election we estimated that the Isolationists represented over 50 per cent of the population.

Hamilton, the attractive little capital of Bermuda, was thoroughly war-conscious. The Colony had come in for much publicity abroad in connection with the leasing of the naval base to the United States, and Bermudians were proud to think their island was so vital a point in the defences of the Atlantic. Admiral Sir C. E. Kennedy Purvis's command ran from the Arctic Ocean to the coast of Brazil, and merchant ships were continually assembling here before their perilous voyage in convoy to Great Britain. Many of the ships we saw in Bermudian waters never reached their destination, because all that winter German submarines were levying a heavy toll.

Since the founding of the Colony, Bermuda has had links with Virginia, and for many years it has been a meeting-place for Americans and Britons. In normal times, 80,000 Americans visit the Colony annually. It is suitable, therefore, that Hamilton should possess an active branch of the English-Speaking Union, for in no part of the world is there a greater realisation of the need for close co-operation between our two Commonwealths. Owing to the war the number of American tourists had greatly declined; but the palatial hotels were filled with British censors, recently arrived.

In view of Bermuda's importance as a half-way house between the English-speaking nations, I found much work awaiting me, and my time was filled with public addresses, committee meetings, and planning for the future. Since Bermuda was destined to be one of the chief American bases, there would henceforth be permanent garrisons of British and American defence units. The task of helping the fighting men from both sides of the Atlantic, to get to know one another, was tackled with enthusiasm by the leading members of the community, who pledged themselves at a large meeting over which the Governor, Sir Denis Bernard, presided, to work for this object with the utmost energy.

Hamilton was a port of call for the American transatlantic Clippers, on their way to the Azores and Lisbon. The island was also an important naval centre and suspect neutral shipping was brought into the harbour from time to time. When walking along the quay one morning, I observed the cargo from a large Japanese merchant ship being taken on shore by Japanese sailors, for examination by the British naval authorities. It was known that the Japanese were rendering secret aid to German "commerce raiders," and as the small Japanese officers walked through the streets of Hamilton they were the target of none too friendly glances.

Formal discussions were then taking place between the American and British officials concerning arrangements for the leasing of the base to the United States Government, and the U.S. cruiser *St. Louis*, with the American admiral on board, was moored to the landing-stage. For some days the island was crowded with American sailors, strolling about, riding bicycles, or driving in one-horse "surreys," Bermuda's favourite means of locomotion, for motor cars are barred in the Colony. The American sailors evidently enjoyed their excursions along the white roads flanked by gardens and flowering trees.

The churches were full to overflowing with congregations of white and coloured folk, for there is no colour bar in places of worship as in the United States. The "Tories" of 100 years ago, who wished to keep the Negroes in subserviency, would have been surprised, could they have seen the well-dressed

crowds of descendants of their slaves, all in their Sunday best; they certainly provided a satisfactory testimony to the progress achieved in a century of British colonial rule. The economic position of the coloured folk, however, left room for improvement, since here, as in other colonial territories, there were not sufficient jobs for the well-educated Negro youths. At the Berkeley Institute, the secondary school for coloured students, I learnt that when the pupils left, having obtained their certificates, they found difficulty in getting employment, for the reason that the best positions in the civil service and in the police force were the preserve of the white community.

Great interest was naturally being taken in the outcome of the Presidential election. A leading member of the American community said that the odds were six to four on Mr. Willkie; we heard the result on the voyage back to New York. The early figures were read out to the passengers in the smoking-room after dinner; we retired before midnight without knowing what the final result was. At 2.30 a.m. I went up to the purser's office, in my dressing-gown, and was informed by the young man on duty in reply to my query, "Willkie has conceded." For a moment I wondered whether this was an American expression for stating that Willkie had won!

It was an historic moment when the majority of voters in the United States elected a President for a third term.

## CHAPTER IV

### NEUTRAL AMERICA IN 1940

NEW YORK IS THE WONDER CITY OF THE NEW WORLD. PERFECT AUTUMN WEATHER greeted us, and the skyscrapers, touched by the setting sun, looked like fairy palaces of amber. A fantastic dream city.

We spent our first afternoon watching the carefree skaters on the open-air rink, at the foot of the most remarkable group of office buildings in the world, the Rockefeller Plaza. Male and female instructors, dressed in pale blue uniforms, were giving a display of their proficiency in fancy skating. After watching them I turned to the paper I had brought with me; it contained an article by Gerald W. B. Johnson, of the *Baltimore Sun*, entitled "England Restoring Belief." The generous words of the American writer transported us back to London where history was being made, and we realised that, despite its drabness and dinginess, London was gaining immortal fame.

As we journeyed around America we realised increasingly how many were the friends and admirers of our little island. After all, it was unreasonable to expect the masses of America to appreciate all the implications of the life-and-death struggle being fought out in Europe; and Englishmen who might incline to be critical of America's neutrality, had to face realities and recognise the extreme difficulties that confronted the Administration. The United States is no longer a predominantly Anglo-Saxon country of British descent, although as recently as 1920, out of 95,000,000 Americans, 55,000,000 were stated<sup>1</sup> as

<sup>1</sup> Mr. William S. Rossiter, a statistician of high standing, in the *Atlantic Monthly*, August, 1920.

tracing their origin to England, Scotland and Wales. The British ratio in the total population is estimated to-day to be but 45 per cent. Within the United States are vast racial groups for whom Great Britain is in no sense the Mother Country. Two of these—the Germans and the Italians—were anxious to keep out of the struggle at all costs, and were but following the example of Southern Ireland, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

On a Sunday in New York we had a demonstration of the fact that America's racial roots are widespread, and that the foreign-born population which numbers 13,000,000 is distinctly vocal. For nearly two hours we watched a vast procession of the members of the Holy Name Society filing down Fifth Avenue to St. Patrick's Cathedral. The procession, escorted by thirty-five bands, consisted of Posts of the American Legion and Italian Veterans of the last world war. The Stars and Stripes were flying amid the banners of the various Catholic Societies, and priests were leading the male members of their flocks. At the head of each band walked a "Majorette"—in England termed a bandmaster—striding along and swinging her baton. Clad in lemon and white, with skirts like ballet dancers, bare-legged, and wearing tasselled white-topped boots, these prancing young women were cake-walking down Fifth Avenue. Other groups of young women marched along in yellow trousers, carrying rifles, followed by troops of small boys of four or five, in long-trousered satin suits. The bands of the steel-helmeted Veterans of Foreign Wars looked stern and stolid. Then, by way of contrast, followed more women, clad in fluted skirts of red velvet, white-topped boots, and Hussar-like fur caps. The demonstrators were very much in earnest and were doubtless good Christians. I tried to understand the psychology responsible for the parade, and felt that the sponsors of the procession were endeavouring to bring colour into the drab lives of the masses.

The American Press, as a whole, was very friendly to Great Britain, but the champions of Isolationism were working actively to keep America out of the war. When I went round to the office of the B.B.C. for a rehearsal of a transatlantic broadcast on the Empire Air Training Plan, a representative of the Hearst Press asked me: "Do you want to get America into the war?" I replied that no doubt America would do whatever she considered to be in her best interests, but this did not satisfy him, for when I went round to the Columbia Broadcasting Studio to do the actual broadcast, the Hearst reporter was lying in wait for me. Presumably he was anxious to make quite sure that I made no last-minute alterations in the script.

Despite the Isolationists an amazing tide of human sympathy for bombed-out Britain was sweeping the whole country. Right across the continent we visited workrooms, offices and private homes, where sympathisers were cutting, sewing, knitting and preparing Red Cross supplies to be dispatched, through the British War Relief, the Bundles for Britain, the English-speaking Union, and other organisations. Wherever we went we met Americans displaying brooches consisting of a golden lion, flanked by two flags, showing that the wearers were supporters of British war relief. The William White Committee had enthusiastic workers in almost every part of the country, and many of its supporters stressed the view that, sooner or later, America would have to come in. The committee stood for the utmost aid to Britain, and all along held views that were slightly in advance of the Administration.

British prestige had never in living memory been so high, and there was a

whole-hearted admiration for the R.A.F. Americans almost regarded our airmen as their own. There was widespread admiration also for the Royal Navy, despite the fact that much of its work was unspectacular throughout.

It was satisfactory to find how widely the view that the British Navy was America's first line of defence had been accepted in 1940. Lord Lothian was in part responsible for the gradual realisation that it was owing to the British control of the seas during the nineteenth century that the young United States had been able to concentrate its energies in developing its own vast territories, without fear of external aggression. If American respect for British foreign policy had sunk to a low ebb in the days of appeasement, the R.A.F., the Royal Navy and Mr. Churchill, and the wonderful morale of the British people during the Battle of Britain had restored it to the proper level.

In the first weeks of the Battle of Britain, Americans were horrified when they read of the bombings of London, Coventry and other cities, but as the raids of the Luftwaffe continued, the public grew accustomed to read about damage and destruction. It was just as if they were sitting in a cinema and watching the unfolding of a great and remote drama that did not touch them intimately. If America wanted to keep out of modern war, this was understandable; in any case, the first reaction of the ordinary individual was "Why should we become involved in the quarrels of Europe?"

I had several talks with Clarence K. Streit, the creator of Federal Union and author of *Union Now With Britain*, a book which he was then just completing. Streit is a Nordic-looking Westerner, tall and thin, a blend of English, Scotch and German descent; he was born in Montana and was consecrating his great energies to the task of promoting world unity. The mere fact that an American writer was able to advocate union with Britain showed how far American public opinion had moved since the beginning of the century. For the first time in a lifelong association with the United States, I met Americans in various parts of the country who came to discuss the possibilities of some form of close association between the two great English-speaking World States. There was a dawning realisation that neither the United States nor the British Commonwealth, acting alone, was strong enough to ensure sanity and decency in international affairs, but that if they would but join forces, they could do it together. One of the most prominent books displayed on the news-stands that autumn, was *Oliver Wiswell*, Kenneth Robert's historical novel, the hero of which is a Loyalist in the American Revolution.

A very real sorrow was the fact that I never saw Lothian before starting on our lecture tour, for he was one of my oldest friends. On many occasions during the previous thirty years we had discussed the future of the English-speaking world, and I was anxious to have the benefit of his guidance on our tour. Lothian had invited us to stay at the Embassy and await his return from Great Britain, whither he had gone for a short visit. For most of the time we had the Embassy to ourselves, but Mr. Neville Butler, the *Chargé d'Affaires*, who lived close by, went out of his way to make us feel at home. We knew that Lothian was held up at Lisbon and we postponed our departure by several days, in the hope that we should see him, but speaking engagements must be carried out, so we finally left Washington on the 22nd of November, two days before his return. I little thought that I should never see him again; three weeks later we heard of his unexpected death. Lothian's loss at that juncture was irreparable, for few

men in British public life were better qualified to represent Great Britain at Washington. He had a first-hand knowledge of the British Commonwealth; as Secretary of the Rhodes Trust, he had visited the leading universities in North America; above all, he understood Americans and loved their country. He had a happy knack in his dealings with the Press, and I think he enjoyed his many newspaper contacts as much as his journalistic friends valued his friendship.

We travelled three times across the continent, visiting most of the leading cities, from Boston to Seattle and from Los Angeles to New Orleans. In the Eastern States we spoke in seven different towns in eight days. I addressed various types of audiences—branches of the English-Speaking Union, Chambers of Commerce, Boards of Trade, British War Relief organisations, University gatherings, Women's Clubs, members of the legal fraternity, and educational institutions. When the gatherings were not exclusively confined to the male sex, my wife always spoke. A husband and wife speaking from the same platform appeared to be something of a novelty. The enthusiasm for Britain and the warmth extended to anyone recently arrived from Great Britain was genuinely moving; and the generosity of Americans, individually and collectively, on behalf of the war funds in which we were interested, was simply overwhelming.

In Mr. Henry Ford's home town, Detroit, I was asked to preach the sermon on Sunday morning at Christ Church, Grosse Pointe, an opportunity that I gladly accepted, for Mr. Ford, only a few days before, had stated that the present struggle was just like previous wars, a clash of rival imperialisms. The occasion enabled me to present to a leading congregation the British point of view, and to emphasise the fact that we were engaged on a crusade to establish the right of small nations to lead their own life. Naturally there were some people who challenged this interpretation of British war aims, and stated that we were merely fighting to save our own skin, as any other nation would in like circumstance. But the American audiences, without exception, gave unqualified approval to our interpretation of what Britain was fighting for.

Two meetings in the Middle West, the stronghold of Isolationism, are worth recalling. Chicago was in the grip of a winter blizzard; the waves on the shore of Lake Michigan were lashed into fury by the wind, and snow whirled and eddied in the streets; faced by such circumstances in Great Britain, no one would have dreamt of going out. To our amazement we found a very responsive gathering, including the Consuls of Greece, Poland and Yugoslavia and their wives, and the presence of these representatives of our European Allies added a very special note to the occasion. When we shook hands with the audience at the end of the meeting, two women came up to us and said: "Tell your friends at home that we drove through a hundred miles of this blizzard to hear you, because you come from London, and we love England."

One of the happiest evenings of our tour was in Milwaukee, which possesses a high percentage of citizens of German descent. At the dinner organised by the English-Speaking Union, at the University Club, were 250 leaders of the city's civic life. We had been slightly apprehensive as to the reception we should get, but we need have had no qualms, for in no part of the United States, or of the British Empire, would it have been possible to address a gathering more whole-heartedly anti-Nazi. In the dining-hall the tables were decorated with the Stars and Stripes and the Union Jack, and there was an electric atmosphere. The chairman introduced us to the mother of an "Eaglet," one of the American-born

pilots in the R.A.F. When my wife spoke of what Great Britain was going through, she brought tears to the eyes of the audience. A number of those present came up afterwards to talk to us, and prefaced their remarks with the welcome phrase, "When we come into the war." Never before had we heard so many expressing the hope that America would soon take her place alongside Great Britain. Many of the guests told us their parents or grandparents came from Germany, but that they detested Hitler and all his works.

Travelling across great distances in mid-winter we found very trying, owing to climatic changes. During the month of December we experienced 20 degrees below zero at Minneapolis, and three weeks later, 60 degrees above at Victoria, on Vancouver Island.

Every important city in the United States has its own radio system, and interviewing by radio is much more widely practised than in Great Britain. The person interviewed is allowed to say exactly what he likes, and his script is not blue-pencilled as it is in the case of the B.B.C. In a western city I was interviewed on the radio by a vivacious Irish girl of 19, who was responsible for a daily feature "on the air." When the conversation turned to the subject of Ireland, I feared I might be treading on dangerous ground, but an Irishman, whether from north or south, is permitted considerable latitude in the United States. My fellow countrywoman did not object to my criticising Southern Ireland's neutrality. In Portland, Oregon, no objection was made to my pleading for more ships and planes, and the speeding-up of aid to Britain; in fact, short of urging American participation in the war, I was permitted complete freedom of speech.

Just before Christmas we went to Vancouver and Victoria, to carry out several speaking engagements. At the King Edward Secondary School, Vancouver, we addressed an audience of 1,400 young Canadians, boys and girls varying in age from 14 to 20. Thirteen nationalities were represented by the school, and the audience included 126 Japanese, 40 Chinese, 13 Germans and 13 Italians, with a sprinkling of Hindus, Armenians and Icelanders. I asked the Headmaster if he ever had any trouble between the Chinese and Japanese, he promptly replied: "No, they get on perfectly together; the only children we sometimes find difficult are the Scotch and Irish!" The proceedings terminated with the singing of "Oh, Canada," "There'll Always be an England," and "God Save the King."

Two days before Christmas on our way south I succumbed to a bad attack of influenza, and felt it was kind of fate to have waited till the holiday season, as since the commencement of the tour I had not had to cancel a single engagement. Instead of going straight to California as planned, we had to break our journey at Seattle, where we kept our presence unknown to our friends, as we did not want to impose on their wonderful hospitality a second time, especially during the holiday season.

Christmas, 1940, at the Olympic Hotel, will always be a dreary memory. The weather was atrocious, I was in bed for a week with 'flu; and if the extract from my diary, written during these days, sounds a trifle jaundiced, let me plead the excuse of "flu depression." "Christmas in U.S.A., 1940," is the heading, and it reads: "For once I am going to let myself go. For several months we have curbed our words and sought to hide our feelings in the face of the, to us, incomprehensible indifference as to what Great Britain is going through. Even

the Cockney housemaid here, who has lived in America for many years, calmly said to me when she was doing the room yesterday: 'I suppose very little of London is left now.' I had always thought that once the bombing of London began, it would stir the latent feeling of deep affection of the American people for the shrine of English-speaking civilisation. I hold no such illusions now; they have become accustomed to reading of Britain's sufferings. Americans are so thankful not to be in the war, that they have little time to get down to bed-rock, and to take stock dispassionately. A taximan in Seattle when I asked him what America would feel like if Hitler were suddenly to invade America, replied: 'Hitler will never invade America: England will see to that!'

"Nothing seems to matter as long as the inhabitants can enjoy their bounteous Christmas fare; they justify their disinclination to become involved by recalling Washington's words about no foreign entanglements. I write thus bitterly because there seems a fresh wave of Isolationism here, with the nauseating repetition of America's desire not to enter the conflict. These sentiments are expressed simultaneously with emphasis laid on the need for America to play a leading part in the post-war settlement. Whether this fresh wave of Isolationism is due to an increasing realisation of the urgent need for a speeding-up in the output of war supplies from this country, of greater financial help to Britain, or of the necessity for more convoys and more ships, I do not know. These few days in bed, on top of our strenuous travels, have enabled me to take stock. For the past two months we have been confronted with the determination of the American public to 'enjoy the most prosperous Christmas in years'; and according to the Press this has been the best Christmas since 1929. There has been an orgy of thanking the Almighty for the blessings of peace; we have only twice heard prayers said for Britain, once at Christ Church, Grosse Pointe, and at the Episcopalian Cathedral at Spokane.

"America celebrates her Christmas on a much more wholesale scale than we do. The 'festival spirit' of the Christmas season is put over by expert propagandists. Small Christmas trees, cut by the thousand in neighbouring forests, and decorated with electric bulbs, are to be found in every home. Electric garlands are festooned across the streets in the cities, and cotton snowflakes are attached to the windows of the railway waiting rooms, while monster Christmas trees are placed in the vestibules of the termini. We had expected to find the newspapers appealing to their readers to make collections on behalf of embattled Britain on Christmas Day; instead, when we took up our papers on Christmas Eve we found full-page advertisements of the No Foreign War Committee, headed: 'The best Christmas gift is to keep this country out of the war.' Despite all this, nothing can make us believe that vast numbers of the people are not with us; 90 per cent of the population is violently anti-Axis, and in no part of the world are Hitler and Mussolini so mercilessly criticised. At none of the gatherings we have addressed has the assertion that Britain is fighting the war of democracy been challenged.

"After breakfast on Christmas morning we turned on the radio to listen to the National Broadcasting Programme, entitled 'Christmas Greetings to Great Britain, by English and American entertainers, from Hollywood, New York and Chicago.' The programme started with 'There'll Always be an England,' sung by Gracie Fields. The Americans who took part in that show, will never know how much it meant to us, 6,000 miles from home, perched in our lonely



bedroom, looking out on to a dreary rain-swept world. Perhaps the depression that comes with flu is making me take a jaundiced view, and I hope that these kind Americans who spoke over the radio this morning represent the real voice of America. I take comfort in the thought that America, caring for free institutions as she does, must surely in the long run give every possible aid to Britain. . . . We have just been listening to the radio feature, 'Christmas Under Fire' from Great Britain, and to the Christmas evening festivities in London air-raid shelters."

When our spirits were at their lowest, and President Roosevelt gave one of his "Fireside Talks" on the radio, it might have been purposely planned to dispel our depression; for his address was better than anything we had dared hope. A Press commentator said: "Last night President Roosevelt finally broke with Germany." The following morning a leading article appeared which commenced with this sentence: "The *Seattle Times* approves of every word the President said in his radio address to the nation last night, on preparedness and assistance to be given to Great Britain. The *Times* only regrets that the President did not go further. If Britain should be defeated, in the end the United States will be ruined . . . but whether Hitler realises it or not, Mr. Roosevelt's speech means just one thing. It is like the ancient handwriting on the wall.

"It may take him months to realise it, but Herr Hitler is through."

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From Carmel we travelled to Los Angeles by the wonderful Daylight Express. A great orange locomotive, with clanging bell, and a great orb of light on its forefront, hauling the all-steel orange streamliner, came thundering into Monterey Station and revived my boyhood's enthusiasm for trains. During the journey an invisible conductor informed us by loud-speaker of the points of interest which we were passing. The voice said: "You are now in America's 'Salad Bowl,' whence 6,000 carloads of lettuce are shipped each year." A few minutes later, the voice informed a fellow-passenger that a telegram had been received for him, and requested him to claim it when the agent walked down the train. Just before we arrived at Los Angeles station, our unknown and unseen friend thus took farewell of us: "We hope you have had a restful journey and that you will come again, good-night, folks"—the quintessence of the personal touch!

America leads the world in railway stations, and among the most wonderful is that of Los Angeles. The station is built with patios, in Spanish-American style. Through arches open to the air, you look out on to gardens with palm groves, oleanders, blossoming shrubs, and fountains playing. There are large waiting halls, the size of cathedrals, with ceilings so remote that the noise of hurrying mortals is lost in space. There is no flurry or turmoil; an organ plays at intervals, and a cross-section of humanity sits in comfortable leather armchairs. The admirably clear loud-speaker, in conversational tone, tells you that the *Lark* is just leaving for New Orleans, or the *South Wind* for San Diego. The passengers picked up their bags and made their way in an orderly manner, to the exact section of the platform where they knew their destined car would be drawn up. The baggage registration counter was as different from the luggage booking-office on the Continental platform of Victoria Station as Westminster Abbey is from a corrugated-iron chapel in a Welsh mining village. Railway

officials, looking like professors, stood behind a vast counter, and at their back were an incredible number of neatly arranged pigeon-holes where labels to every important town in the United States are always kept in perfect classification. If the railway official was bored with his duties he could look out through spacious windows on to the garden, where birds sit singing on orange trees.

At the Biltmore Hotel all was bustle, for the Convention of the Dressmakers and Allied Industries of Southern California was in occupation. The Conventionites were engaged on a campaign to make Los Angeles the arbiter of women's fashions, now that Paris was in German occupation. Every elevator was packed, and we made our way with difficulty through a seething mass of male and female dress experts. This was a war in which all could stand shoulder to shoulder. Those were exciting times. I had first known Los Angeles thirty years ago, as a comparatively small city then engaged in an attempt to surpass San Francisco, which was still recovering from the effects of fire and earthquake. Now Los Angeles was engaged on the more exciting attempt to oust Detroit from the position of fourth city in the United States!

Los Angeles is one of the greatest melting-pots on earth; if you sit in its palm-planted squares and gardens, you see almost every type of human being. On the benches around we heard German, French, Italian, Spanish, Russian and many unfamiliar tongues. This Babel of voices made us realise afresh the tremendous difficulty of obtaining national unity in the United States. Almost every racial type was represented; the Negro sat cheek by jowl with the Mongol, and the Aryan beside the Semite, and every now and then the original owner of the land, the American Indian, usually from across the Mexican border, passed inscrutably by.

In yellow taxis you dash along the streets at fifty miles an hour to Hollywood, ten miles away, or Pasadena. Los Angeles is one of the most widely spread out cities in the world—it covers 450 square miles. The smart section rivals the Champs-Élysées or Fifth Avenue. Some of its suburbs resemble overgrown villages; in the twists and turns of the Beverley Hills you are reminded of Italian hill-towns. There is one motor car for every two and a half citizens—a world's record. At night from your bedroom window electric signs invite you to "Save your Soul," to "Read the *Examiner*" or "Buy a Buick."

The advertising expert has a wide field for ingenuity; his services are required from the cradle to the grave. Outside a church was a flaming poster stating that "A Holy Ghost Rally" was to take place the following week. In an electric street car possible clients were instructed concerning the "little church round the corner." Among its services to the community as set forth were: "Funeral Services, etc., including casket (coffin) and music. The perfect tribute! The newest and finest Funeral Establishment." The Little Church belonged to Pierse Brothers and was one of their famous "Funeral Homes." The departed, who availed themselves of Pierse Brothers' efficient methods, had the satisfaction of knowing they would be taking leave of this imperfect world under the snappiest conditions, and with American "pep" applied to every detail.

## CHAPTER V

## MEXICAN INTERLUDE

INTEREST IN THE PAN-AMERICAN IDEAL WAS GROWING IN THE UNITED STATES, AND there was a leading school of thought that emphasised its importance, rather than that of English-speaking unity, especially among the Isolationists, who wanted to keep away from all entanglements in Europe. We decided to ascertain how far Mexico aimed at drawing closer to the Spanish-speaking Republics of Central and South America, and to study on the spot how great was the local enthusiasm for Pan-American union.

The problem was of very definite interest to those connected with the promotion of better British-American understanding. I had always held the view that English-speaking unity was not exclusive and did not preclude other allegiances, such, for instance, as the drawing closer of the ties between the nations of North and South America for political and economic reasons. As a parallel case, Great Britain's special connections with the European Continent did not preclude her from strengthening the ties which united her with the partner States of the British Commonwealth, or with her sister English-speaking Commonwealth, the United States. If the ideal of Pan-American solidarity deserves support, as it does, so does the furtherance of English-speaking solidarity. On many occasions I have discussed this problem with American friends, and found them in full agreement.

In view of the fact that diplomatic relations between Great Britain and the Republic of Mexico had been none too friendly of recent years, various formalities had to be gone through at the Mexican Consulate at Los Angeles, and the Foreign Office in Mexico City had to be communicated with, before a visa was granted.

El Paso, 4,000 feet above sea level, is the usual town of entry into Mexico from the American South-West. It is a bustling city in which Texan cowboys, lanky of limb; wearing huge hats, and looking like Gary Cooper, rubbed shoulders in the hotel lounge with commercial travellers and tourists, and issued their commands to the Mexican bell-boys, clad in scarlet jackets and blue trousers, as if the place belonged to them. El Paso is on the northern side of the Rio Grande, and thus divides the Anglo-Saxon and Latin civilisations. On the southern bank is the Mexican town of Juarez; the border city consists chiefly of mud-brick houses, and the principal building is the bull ring. We had to visit the local Immigration Office, at Juarez, because of passport formalities, and a taciturn official, telling us to wait, left us to twiddle our thumbs for forty minutes near an ineffective gas stove, trying to keep warm, while a leisurely bureaucracy dealt with forms and formalities. Mexicans of all sorts lounged in and out, and through a back window we gazed on the local refuse heap, where hens were rummaging and an elderly couple collected pickings. Finally the head official told us we must each deposit 150 American dollars, to be handed back to us on our departure from the country. Owing to the war the Government was evidently afraid of being saddled with British travellers without dollar currency.

We had left Anglo-Saxon civilisation behind us, so that time no longer counted. An American fellow-traveller summed up his views of Mexico, with which he was well acquainted, in the sentence: "Everything here is as slow as

molasses running up a hill!" The 1,200-mile journey from El Paso to Mexico City takes the best part of three days, during which we ambled at thirty miles an hour across a great plain dotted with scrub and prickly pear. The primitive villages consisted of square-shaped huts of mud and stick, most of them without windows, presumably on account of the dust. The huts were enclosed by a fence of stakes and straw was scattered in the little courtyards, where lived the families, with their spotted pigs, goats, donkeys, fowl, and emaciated dogs. In the heavens flocks of black vultures, the village scavengers, hovered almost out of sight. Round many of the settlements grew thick hedges of prickly pear and rows of cacti, from which is made the popular drink called pulqui. When the train stopped we stretched our legs on the platforms, but we had to tread warily on account of the frequent spitting, and the ground was littered with orange peel and banana skins. Every now and then the drab crowds were brightened by some well-dressed woman, attractive in mantilla or bright kerchief. As we proceeded further south, the countryside became more fertile; we were now 7,000 feet above sea level, and looking down upon vast fields of ploughed red earth, and distant plains dotted with fantastic yucca palms.

There were but few passengers on the train, but surprisingly good meals were served in the dining-car. At the next table to us a Mexican couple were consuming with gusto cold roast chicken, which Madam had produced out of a newspaper parcel. They tore the flesh from the carcass with their fingers, and after the meal, she wrapped up the bones and fragments in a greasy piece of newspaper, which she carefully placed inside her bosom; presumably it was to remain ensconced there till the next meal!

At break of day on the last morning, we stopped at Queretaro, still notorious as the place where the Emperor Maximilian was shot in 1867. Vendors of home-made cakes flitted along the platform in the twilight, their wares laid out for sale, on trays balanced on their heads, and in the centre of each tray was a lighted candle. The local pigs, dogs and chickens competed with small boys, and amused themselves by scavenging for food beneath the carriages. We took a friendly farewell of the conductor of the train; he spoke such good English that we thought he must be an Anglo-Saxon. He told us his mother was an Englishwoman, and his father a Frenchman; that he had lived at Croydon from the age of six to sixteen, and had since become a Mexican citizen.

Mexico City is a large modern town with a million and a half inhabitants and shoddy suburbs; but it has boulevards which would do credit to Paris and it has a magnificent site, encircled by mountains. Our hotel was entirely patronised by Americans, from whom we learnt the latest war news; since leaving El Paso we had been without newspapers or wireless.

Many Mexican taxi-drivers spoke English, having been in the United States; they warmly applauded the fight that Great Britain was making against Nazi tyranny, but thanked their stars that Mexico was not likely to become involved in the war—quite understandable, for during much of the country's 125 years of independence its history has been stormy and turbulent. Our taxi friends told us they had many American tourists, but we were the first British visitors to come their way for a long time; they were prepared to talk on almost any subject and stated that there was very little religion left in Mexico.

We visited the Cathedral where Emperor Maximilian was crowned. A funeral service was taking place and the building was thronged with the very

poor, so evidently the Church has not lost its hold on the masses. The maimed and the halt pressed round us, and the worshippers, kneeling upright on the stone flags, rapt in prayer, paid no attention to a small mite of two who wandered about crying "Mama" in a piercing voice. It was difficult to form a correct estimate as to the hold that religion still had on the life of the nation as a whole. In the early days of the revolution the churches had been closed entirely for three years, but by 1941 many places of worship had been reopened, and most of them were in a dilapidated condition. As for convents and monasteries, these still remained closed and no religion was taught in the Government schools.

Mexico is a vast country, 2,000 miles from north to south, with a population of 20,000,000. On account of its geographical position it is destined to play an important part as an interpreter between North and South America. Granted stable government and a comprehensive plan of development, with irrigation and up-to-date farming methods, a great future undoubtedly awaits it. At the Foreign Office the Government's external policy was explained to me; the "good neighbourly" programme of the United States administration was certainly bearing fruit. The two chief planks in Mexico's foreign relations were the cultivation of friendly relations with the United States—a country with which it has increasingly close economic relations, and from which Mexico's lucrative tourist traffic flows; and secondly, the development of friendly co-operation with the Republics of Central and South America.

The severance of diplomatic relations between Great Britain and Mexico, when the Mexican Government expropriated the foreign-controlled oilfields, was a delicate subject. There appeared to have been mistakes on both sides, but I came away with the impression that before long diplomatic relations would be renewed, as has proved to be the case.

The enjoyment of a visit to a hitherto unfamiliar country is greatly enhanced by the previous study of outstanding historic figures. My wife had steeped herself in the tragic story of Maximilian and Carlotta, so that at the Palace of Chapultepec there was no need for a guide; she led me from room to room as if she had lived there herself, and she certainly knew much more about Carlotta's habits than the friendly Spaniard who acted as cicerone. Chapultepec is built on a basalt rock, two or three hundred feet above the city, in the midst of a national park; it dominates Mexico City as Edinburgh Castle dominates Edinburgh. After four days of slight mist, the skies cleared, and we gazed with wonder at Mount Popocatepetl, the snow-capped volcano, sixty miles away, affectionately referred to by the inhabitants as "Popo." Chapultepec is a dream palace surrounded by woods, and far from the noise of the city. We looked down on 700-year-old cypress trees, dating from Aztec times, and wandered about the formal gardens with their pergolas, red and blue at that time of the year, with plumbago and pelargonium climbing up the columns. Many of Mexico's presidents have lived at Chapultepec, including Porfirio Diaz, the undisputed dictator of Mexico for thirty-one years, till he was obliged to flee the country in 1911.

Maximilian's summer palace was situated at Cuernavaca, fifty miles from the capital. The road to it crosses a mountain pass of 10,000 feet, and within an hour descends 5,000 feet into the valley below. Cuernavaca, an unspoilt old Spanish-American town, contains the original palace that Cortes built in 1529, now the City Hall; and certainly the conqueror of Mexico had an eye for a view. We lunched in the delightful Borda Gardens, laid out two hundred years before by

a French mining magnate, and used by Maximilian and Carlotta as their country retreat. There was a tropical languor about the place that soothed the senses, as we wandered about its disused paths, with oleander, hibiscus, jacaranda and thumbergia in flower. There was a formal water garden with Carlotta's summer arbour, and a background of far-away mountains—very peaceful and old-world in its atmosphere, but full of poignant memories. It was here that Maximilian and Carlotta spent their last quiet hours together, the last hours which still held some happiness for them. Maximilian had few illusions as to what lay ahead, but Carlotta still hoped they might yet win the confidence of the Mexicans, and never realised how ill-suited they were for the position Napoleon the Third had thrust upon them. A few months later she set out on her fruitless expedition to enlist Napoleon's aid, and so sure was she of meeting with success in her mission that when confronted with blank indifference her mind broke down under the strain. The heart-breaking news that his wife had gone out of her mind reached Maximilian a few weeks before he faced his tragic end at Queretaro when he was shot at dawn by Juarez's orders. He won the reluctant admiration of his foes in those last hours of his life.

The Teotihuacan Pyramids, only discovered in 1905, are thirty miles from Mexico City; they are but 2,000 years old and not as high as the Pyramids in Egypt, but have an interest of their own as memorials of Toltec and Aztec civilisation. Alongside is the enormous courtyard with an ancient sacrificial altar in the centre, where the Aztecs used to offer up comely youths and maidens, fattened for the occasion, to propitiate the gods. In the fervour of religious ecstasy, according to tradition, the young Indians went joyfully to their doom. In a neighbouring museum we saw the rough implements of obsidian stone with which the living hearts were hacked out of the young bodies.

In the suburb of Coyoacan is the villa in which Trotsky was murdered the year before; as there is no death penalty in Mexico the perpetrator of the crime had been given a long term of imprisonment. He is alleged to have spent many hours with his victim and having won Trotsky's friendship to have killed him with a hammer—a sordid end for one of the architects of the Russian Revolution.

On several occasions we saw parties of self-confident young Nazis, whose arrogance brought back memories of the young Storm Troopers we had met in Germany just before the outbreak of the war. A Mexican friend naïvely said on one occasion: "I used to dislike Germans, but now that I have got to know them I find they are really very nice. What pleases us is that many of their young business men are marrying our girls and settling down among us." These young German trade emissaries were evidently carrying out the instructions of Berlin with a view to ingratiating themselves with the Mexican people. Nazi methods of penetration were certainly very thorough!

On the return journey to the United States, in a comfortable train managed by the Missouri and Pacific Railroad and staffed with American personnel, we were back again in a familiar atmosphere. The owner of the leading emporium in Dallas, Texas, was returning there, after having organised the first international dress show in Mexico City. He and his wife had taken with them a dozen attractive American mannequins, so it was not only in southern California that efforts were being made to establish the United States as the arbiter of feminine fashion. These young ladies were delighted to exchange experiences with fellow-travellers. They talked with fervour about their "mission," as if it had

been a peace crusade affecting the destinies of mankind, and not just an incident in Uncle Sam's campaign to increase his exports with his southern neighbour. This was not a case of trade following the flag, but following the fair!

We had gained much useful knowledge during our fourteen days' interlude; we had visited a country of great beauty with a history stretching back thousands of years, rich in human interest, colourful in the extreme. Mexico has undoubtedly a great future before it, but Mexican idealists have plenty of work ahead if their dreams are to be realised.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE FRIENDLY SOUTH

DALLAS, TEXAS—ONE OF THE MOST HOSPITABLE CITIES IN THE WORLD—WAS ANXIOUS to demonstrate the depth of its admiration for Great Britain, and because of this we were given a wonderful welcome in February, 1941. A deputation welcomed us at Dallas station, and two policemen on motor cycles headed the procession of cars to the hotel. Our escort blew their sirens continuously as we sped to our destination, regardless of traffic lights—an exhilarating experience! A gathering of twenty journalists was waiting at the hotel to ask questions about Britain's fight for freedom and her post-war aims.

During a stay of four days, there were public lunches, radio talks and group discussions. At a monster reception in the building of the Historic Society we stood shaking hands for over an hour and a half—a part of our duties to which we were well accustomed. At the Cotton Exchange the members left their stands during the busiest time of the day to listen to our talks on war-time England. Familiar as we were with the lavishness of American hospitality, there seemed to be a deeper note in Dallas's welcome than anything we had hitherto come across; here at last we met people who were watching the struggle in Europe as if it were their own. When we subsequently heard that Texas was the first State to advocate participation in the war we were not surprised.

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Our joy at the news of the capture of Bēnghazi by General Wavell's forces was slightly tempered by the ominous cables concerning developments in the Balkan situation. We listened-in for Churchill's fine speech, and agreed it should do much good in America. The Balkan situation was very confused. I hoped that the severing of our diplomatic relations with Roumania meant we should be able to bomb the oilfields. For the first time during our tour a resident said he thought the only way to defeat Hitler would be for the United States and the British Commonwealth to mobilise their entire resources on a totalitarian basis—proof that the gravity of the situation was being realised, although sentiments such as these were much in advance of the views of the average man. We were informed by our University friends that the exchange of students between the United States and Germany had undoubtedly been one of the causes of the infiltration of Nazi ideals into certain sections of the community.

The "Deep South" has a high percentage of citizens of British descent, and on our journey from Texas through Georgia and South Carolina to Virginia we found a very definite realisation that in unselfish British-American co-operation lay the best hope of a sane world. A Southerner in New Orleans said to me that Hitler deserved a statue, for without Hitler the coming together of the English-speaking people would never have taken place.

New Orleans, with its Latin atmosphere and Mardi Gras celebrations, was a contrast after the war-awareness of Dallas, for the city was busily engaged in preparing for its annual pre-Lent festivities. The leading thoroughfares were decorated; the hotels, stores, and transportation companies were evidently determined that Mardi Gras should be celebrated in as elaborate a way as ever before. A friend took me to enjoy the French cooking in the Vieux Carré, a little bit of old France.

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Atlanta is associated in many minds with the well-known names of Margaret Mitchell, authoress of *Gone with the Wind*, and Bobby Jones, the golfer. Margaret Mitchell (Mrs. Marsh) has Irish blood and is proud of her revolutionary ancestors. I found her very broad-minded, and she told me her Macdonald ancestors fought on the Loyalist side. We discussed modern historical writers, and the fact that Kenneth Roberts had been able to make the hero of his recent and widely selling novel a Loyalist. She disclaimed any right to call herself an historian, and modestly said she was merely a story-teller.

I told her my wife was in bed with influenza and was much disappointed not to have had the pleasure of meeting her, but Margaret Mitchell very kindly offered to come and see her the following afternoon. I quote from an account written by my wife at the time: "She came after lunch and stayed for an hour and a half, and we had an extraordinarily interesting talk. I liked her very much indeed. She is tiny, only four feet eleven inches, but looks taller owing to the fact that she is so well-proportioned. Nice-looking, with blue eyes and lovely teeth, she is utterly natural and entirely unspoilt, and one immediately feels at home with her. She told us many interesting things about her childhood and the talks she used to overhear between older people concerning their experiences in the Civil War—what they had suffered, what they had seen, and the dreadful results of it all. The whole thing was burnt into her consciousness. She was sent to school at Boston as her mother wanted her to be capable of seeing both sides. Whilst she was there friends showed her proudly old furniture, bits of jewellery and treasures of various kinds, which the Union Army had taken from their owners in the south. They did not seem to realise what this would mean to her—more from a complete lack of imagination, she very charitably said, than from want of feeling. Later she steeped herself in the history of the period, reading all the old documents and letters she could find. She is so modest that she said anybody else, living here at Atlanta, could have written the book just as well as she did. This is not affectation, as she really believes it, and the incredible success the book has met with has not turned her head in the very least. But she said it is her joy and her pride to feel she has been able to make the world see the part that Georgia played, and what the Deep South stood for in the past and stills stands for to-day.



"She was deluged with letters, wires and telephone calls for the first two years or so. She received 500 letters a day and the telephone rang continuously, for even during the night people passing through Atlanta sought to get in touch with her. In fact, the telephone became such an ordeal, that she and her husband took it in turns to do night duty in answering calls, as they did not wish anyone to be disappointed. She feels that the film, *Gone with the Wind*, does interpret the story correctly."

Owing to the virulent nature of the influenza epidemic to which my wife had succumbed, we were obliged to postpone our tour for nearly three weeks. A very kind member of the English-Speaking Union, Mrs. Worcester, lent us her delightful little house in Andrews Drive for a week, and there for the first time we had an American home to ourselves. We were looked after by kind and solicitous Charlie, a bald-headed darkie, loose-limbed and dressed in white. Our pine-clad hill was four miles outside the town, and Atlantans surpassed even their record for hospitality. At unexpected moments friends would arrive with armfuls of flowers, or coloured chauffeurs would bring jars of chicken broth or orange juice, a bottle of whisky, and supplies of books and magazines, while offers of the loan of cars were legion. Their large bunches of daffodils reminded us of spring in England, which was probably the thought that prompted these kind gifts—it was only on the last day of our stay that I found that the market price of daffodils was eleven shillings a dozen.

After six months of hotel existence, it was wonderful to be living in "our own" home; we revelled in the absolute quiet after our life of rubbing shoulders with humanity *en masse*. We looked out upon a sunny world, but wondered how the daffodils on the hillside could withstand the hard frost and cutting wind. There was a sheltered spot in the garden, where we sat out at midday, rejoicing in the pyrus japonica, forsythia and periwinkles in flower. An invisible bird repeated from somewhere behind the pine trees, "Sit down, sit down"—presumably a mocking bird. One of our chief amusements was watching the birds feeding on the lawn; among them were red cardinals and bluebirds which shimmered in the sunshine as they flew across the garden.

An unpleasant feature of the 'flu epidemic then rampant in the south was its recurrence; we were infected a second time when convalescing at Sarasota, Florida. Sarasota is a small and bustling town, laid out in checkboard fashion, facing westwards towards the Gulf of Mexico. The war seemed very remote. We had to depend for our news on a local newspaper, primarily concerned with local problems. The parish pump loomed large, and frequently the war news only occupied one column on the front page, so that to learn what was happening in Europe I had to cull items from the back pages. Among the headline topics were the Coronation of the Berry Queen, about to be enthroned at Florida's Strawberry Festival, at Plant City; the turning down of Mrs. Walker's divorce plea by a Florida judge and the stricter laws needed to govern "jooks," though exactly what jooks were we never fathomed. We simply lived for the morning and evening papers, and rejoiced when the news seemed more reassuring—indeed, it looked as if Greece were going on fighting, and as if Turkey would stand by its agreement with us. While at Sarasota we never heard the war mentioned, the population appeared to be entirely absorbed in their local affairs.

We found the explanation of this phenomenon, perhaps, from a kind Boston woman who gave us a lift in her car back to Sarasota from the Ringling Circus,

Winter Headquarters. When we started saying something about the war, she said: "I can't just bear to think of it all in Europe, so I don't." That really was their attitude; they hated the thought of war, what it meant to us, and all that it might yet mean to them, so they just didn't think about it, and in the meantime the legislators of Washington were wasting precious hours in squabbling, instead of getting on with the task of giving all-out aid to Great Britain. With all our love for America we often went through hours when we felt our position to be unendurable; it was so much worse when we were not actually working. In the extraordinary world in which we were living the things that mattered were the Horse-show at Tampa, the Pageant of Sara de Sota, daughter of the Spanish explorer, and the Fair a hundred yards away from our hotel, which kept us awake till after midnight. It was a week of jollification, fireworks, children's parades, a Bathing Beauty Review and Carnival dancing in the main street. The leading citizens of Sarasota suddenly appeared in Spanish fancy dress as they were all taking part in the Grand Parade during Carnival Week. The young lady receptionist at the restaurant where we dined was attired in a red taffeta dress, with flounces from waist to hem, and a black lace Spanish mantilla. The barmen, not to be outdone, sported red sailor hats with red pompoms hanging from the rim, and were clad in toreador-like close-fitting trousers.

At last came the good tidings that the Lend-Lease Bill had been passed by Congress and the comments in the Press showed there was an increasing realisation of the serious phase upon which the war was entering. We listened to the President's speech at the Washington Press dinner, on the passing of the Lend-Lease Bill. We knew what it would mean to the people at home. How it would have cheered us six months earlier had we known that the President would be so outspoken. The bad news from the Mediterranean was certainly having its effect; for the first time the Press columnists began to talk of the sacrifices that lay ahead of the American people. There was little comfort for Hitler in Mr. Roosevelt's remarks. When American industry really got into its stride, provided that strikes could be eliminated, even a German-controlled Europe would not be able to stand up to the "arsenal of democracy."

Sometimes we wondered if we could look into the minds of our fellow-guests in the hotel, whether we should not find much deeper sympathy with our cause than was apparent. One morning on my wife's breakfast tray she found a small newspaper cutting; it had been sent to us by an American woman lying seriously ill in the hotel, who had heard that two English people were her fellow-guests. She was too ill to write. The cutting consisted of the following lines, entitled "As a child sees it":

"To-night the silver moon rides high,  
So fire and death fill England's sky.  
I put my fingers tip to tip  
And place them under the pillow-slip,  
That so my hands be sure to keep  
Praying for England as I sleep."

In the months that followed we often thought of our unknown American friend and her understanding sympathy.

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The last stages of the tour included visits to Jacksonville, Savannah, Charleston and Richmond; and nowhere did we get a warmer welcome than in the south.

Wherever we went we visited the offices of the British War Relief, Red Cross, and other organisations, and were amazed at the output of clothing and comforts being dispatched to Great Britain. Very often at informal parties the host or hostess would propose a toast to "Embattled Britain" or the R.A.F. In no part of the American Continent was there a more universal detestation of Hitler and his methods. A distinguished American ex-diplomat, a warm admirer of Germany before 1914, expressed the view that the only sane policy was: "To extinguish the whole generation of young Germans indoctrinated with Nazi ideas."

Savannah had become an important military centre, so the town was swarming with young soldiers and trainees. At the week-end they came to enjoy themselves at the old-world Hotel de Soto; and watching a couple of hundred young men there in khaki dancing in the tavern reminded us of Britain. It was the only town in the United States where we had found ourselves back again in a military atmosphere.

Every Englishman ought to visit the Atlantic coastal belt of the Southern States, from the mouth of the Potomac down to St. Augustine, Florida, if he wishes to steep himself in America's early history. At St. Augustine he will find an old Spanish city, the northern spearhead, in the East, of Spanish penetration. Savannah and Charleston, Jamestown and Williamsburg, are delightful towns that have retained much of the English atmosphere of the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. We spent many hours in the old cemeteries where the azaleas and magnolias were bursting into blossom. On nearly every grave is a place-name familiar in England, Scotland or Ireland, so that it would be impossible here not to recognise a common inheritance. However much the percentage of British stock may have decreased in the past half-century, owing to Central and Eastern Europe migration, the indubitable fact remains that over 80 per cent of the creators of the American Republic were of British descent and chiefly English at that. To one who believes in the inevitable union of the English-speaking Peoples and who deplors their past dissensions and civil strife, whether in 1776, 1812 or in 1862, a visit to Jamestown and Yorktown is a poignant experience. Dominion Status—*independence and co-operation*—had not been evolved 150 years ago, and the rulers of Great Britain in that vital moment in history were men of small vision. If the English-speaking world could have evolved a system of alliance—somewhat similar to the present status of Australia, and Canada and South Africa and New Zealand, in relation to Great Britain, there need have been no American Revolution.

Again, if the English-speaking world had spoken in advance with one voice, there would certainly have been no world war in 1914, and it is at least arguable that there might not have been one in 1939. I know there are those who assert that the rest of the world would not tolerate a British-American alliance. I do not agree. The unity of the English-speaking peoples does not rest on any conception of race imperialism, for "the subjects of King Shakespeare," to use Carlyle's phrase, are not actuated by any desire to impose their institutions upon others. During the 110 years that Britannia ruled the seas, from the time of Trafalgar to the outbreak of the first world war in 1914, the Royal Navy preserved peace in two hemispheres. The United States and the young republics in Central and South America were able to develop along their own lines, protected from external aggression. Hard words are sometimes levelled against

the British Empire, but the unalterable fact remains that throughout the nineteenth century, from the accession of Queen Victoria to her death—the period in which the British Empire reached new levels of prosperity—its fundamental principles were based on free trade and equal commercial opportunities for all nations. The American exporter shared on a basis of equality with his British rival the trade openings of the great British *entrepôt* ports, of Hongkong, Singapore, Colombo and elsewhere.

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During the last weeks of the tour there was practically continuous bad news from Greece and Libya. The joyful tidings that Yugoslavia was coming into the war seemed almost too good to be true, and was, alas, short-lived. I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw a flaming headline, right across the front page of a newspaper, announcing that 300,000 Greeks had been captured. A few hours later we listened to Mr. Churchill's speech, with an ominous reference to Egypt's peril: it was clear we were going through another "black moment" of the war.

Just when the news from Europe was particularly unpleasant, we were at Richmond, Virginia, staying at one of the few hotels in America that reminded us of a British provincial hotel, except that above the marble-pillared lobby, on the mezzanine floor was a shallow pool with half-a-dozen small alligators, lying motionless with their noses just out of the water.

We met many old friends, including Colonel Henry W. Anderson, the President of the local chapter of the English-Speaking Union, a remarkable man with a philosophic turn of mind, and a student of history. He had always been a great believer in British-American co-operation. When things were at their darkest in the summer of 1940 he never wavered in his conviction that Great Britain would win. He was asked what foundation he had for his belief, and answered, "the British character."

## CHAPTER VII

### FAREWELL AMERICA

WE RETURNED TO WASHINGTON IN HOLY WEEK, HAVING COVERED 12,000 MILES since we set out from the capital in November. There appeared to be a fresh bout of Isolationism. Processions of American mothers, with banners proclaiming that they would not let their boys fight, were marching round the city. There had been serious strikes in the war industry. On the other hand, the Lend-Lease Bill was on the Statute Book and war production was mounting rapidly. Owing to the carrying out of the National Defence Programme, the population of the capital had increased by 100,000 in twelve months. The personnel of British Purchasing Boards and other departments connected with the war, had expanded rapidly. In the hotel lobbies the Oxford accent could frequently be heard; it sounded unfamiliar to our Americanised ears! Opposite our bedroom windows was the National Press Building, in which were the offices of the United Press, so that at all hours of the night I could watch sub-editors working in their shirt

sleeves, busy with messages from correspondents in European capitals. I felt sure that these were recording further evil tidings. No country in the world has such a well-informed foreign news service. The Radio Corporations had weekly features, and in twenty minutes the listener could make a tour round the European capitals, getting tabloid comments from American correspondents resident in Paris, Berlin, Rome, Moscow and Ankara.

In addition to its tens of thousands of "war" workers the capital was crowded with sightseers, pouring in to admire the cherry blossom on the Potomac—Japanese trees originally given to Mr. Taft by the Emperor of Japan.

The cherry trees of Washington are deservedly famous. At the beginning of Holy Week there was not a sign of blossom, but evidently the local Press understood the local climate and flora. Several weeks in advance "cherry week" had been fixed, and nature had to toe the line. Thanks to six days of uninterrupted sunshine, the cherry trees, although of Japanese descent, were worthy of the confidence placed in them. More space was given in the Press to the cherry blossom ceremonies than to the war. At a women's Press lunch, my wife sat next but one to the Blossom Queen, a tall young brunette, whose high office was taken very seriously. Washington could never have looked more lovely than it did on Easter Day; the grounds of the White House were ablaze with cherry, forsythia and magnolia, and the public was allowed to wander about one section. Grey squirrels, not regarded as vermin in America, scampered happily about, and added to the animation of a most delightful scene.

While in Washington we went to see Mr. R. G. Casey,<sup>1</sup> the Australian Minister, and his wife. While we were with the Caseys we received a good demonstration of police efficiency, the Australian Minister subscribed to a special police Protection Service, as is frequently done in the case of residents with important documents. This service guaranteed that the police would be on the spot within two minutes of the sound of an alarm. This was verified in a most surprising way. On doing something to an electric switch in the drawing-room, Mrs. Casey inadvertently contacted the alarm wire. Within less than two minutes two police cars came dashing up the drive, and two stalwart and friendly "cops" rushed into the house with tommy guns!

Washington rightly prides itself on the possession of a palace devoted to the cause of Pan-American Union. Whatever the ultimate form of a world co-operation, machinery for regional consultation will be of the utmost importance, but there is still an obvious gap in the buildings of Washington. The moment is surely at hand when a building should be dedicated to the cause of English-speaking unity? Leading up to it there should be an avenue of statues, by the best living American sculptors, to the giants who have built up the English-speaking world, and who have carried its concepts of freedom to the uttermost ends of the earth.

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I was anxious to study Indian war-time conditions, and investigate on the spot the most difficult political problem then confronting the British Commonwealth. I was also naturally desirous of carrying out the lecture tour in Australia and New Zealand postponed in 1939 on account of ill-health. We therefore

<sup>1</sup> Now Governor of Bengal.

booked our passages to New Zealand and decided to spend a month in Honolulu, before undertaking another mid-winter lecture tour, this time in the Antipodes.

We broke our journey to San Francisco at Santa Fé, which will ~~always~~ be associated in my mind with the terrible air raid on London on 16th April, 1941. It was while staying there that we received a cable informing us that two of the buildings of the Overseas League's Headquarters had been very seriously damaged. The second and third floors, overlooking the Green Park, were completely destroyed, in them were my office and that of my wife, with records, books and many personal possessions collected during twenty-one years—a sad break with the past.

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In my original typescript I had devoted a section of this chapter to American hotels, the most wonderful in the world; but when the time came for cutting down non-essential matter, my blue pencil had to be used freely, and every topic judged as part of an integrated whole. Nevertheless, railway travel played such a large part in our lives, while in the United States, that this tribute must be paid. We spent several weeks in trains on our three transcontinental journeys, on our excursion to Mexico City and on trips along the Atlantic and Pacific seaboard. By making our plans in advance we nearly always obtained a drawing-room compartment<sup>1</sup>—a necessity on a strenuous lecture tour. In its seclusion we passed busy and happy days, there we attended to our large correspondence and kept our records up to date. I was able, without interruptions, to dictate to my wife. On subsequent wanderings on other continents we have often thought longingly of the comfort, cleanliness and quietude of American air-conditioned travel.

On this final journey across the continent we tried to sum up our feelings at the conclusion of our eight months' tour. Despite the wonderfully cordial welcome from our American friends, we experienced a sense of frustration which may have tended to make us hyper-critical. Our entire thoughts had been concentrated on Great Britain's fight for life, we never doubted that our little country, with the help of the Dominions, would win. We certainly did not underestimate the German menace, we had been in Germany too recently for that. At the outbreak of the war I thought that the struggle would last five years, though exactly how we were to overcome Germany without active American aid on the battlefield we had never clearly thought out. We relied on the supremacy of the Royal Navy, on the growing might of the R.A.F., and on the increasing stream of American munitions, but we certainly underestimated the Nazi ability to harness the energies and output of occupied Europe to the German war machine. When the Empire Air Training Plan, the beginnings of which we had seen in Canada, got into full swing, and the R.A.F. was able to embark on an all-out bombing of war industries, we assumed that German morale would crack. There were, many, in those days, who said that the best help America could give Great Britain was to serve as the arsenal for democracy and remain neutral.

Coming from war-time Britain the luxury of the well-to-do in America hit us on the raw; in normal times American prosperity, thronged and exclusive

<sup>1</sup> The separate compartment in the Pullman which corresponds to a section for two in a Wagon-Lit.

restaurants, great departmental stores selling expensive goods, would not have made so vivid an impact on us. In our state of mental tension, knowing the hardships that our people were going through at home, we resented the luxury and waste we saw around us. The morning after we arrived in New York my wife received by the early post a circular letter from a neighbouring *modiste*; it ran as follows: "My dear Lady Wrench, we are sure during your stay you will wish to replenish your wardrobe. There is a special line in hats decked with fur to which we would like to draw your attention, which can be obtained for seventy-five dollars<sup>1</sup> each. Looking forward to your call."

Many in America seemed to be living in a fool's paradise; we were convinced that we were fighting not only for the right of small nations to survive, but for all those concepts of freedom which the founders of the United States held dear. As we read the speeches of the Isolationists they appeared to us to be leading their fellow countrymen astray; ostrich-like they were hiding their heads in the sand and thanking God that free and prosperous America was far removed from the European battle zone.

America, ever since I had visited it in 1906, had come second only in my affections to my own country; the reunion of the English-speaking peoples had been my cherished dream. If the Isolationists had their way and Britain were left alone to battle against Nazi Germany, I feared there would be lasting bitterness between the British Commonwealth and the United States, and that the cause of the reunion of the English-speaking people would be inevitably postponed.

I agreed with Walter Hines Page that the greatest result of the first world war had been the coming together of the English-speaking peoples—a matter that I had often discussed with him, both while he was editor of *World's Work* and after he became Ambassador in London, and with his partner, F. N. Doubleday, one of my earliest American friends. From my standpoint one of the tragedies of the first world war was Page's untimely death; when peace came he had promised to help me in a crusade to promote English-speaking unity.

The strength of the Isolationist sentiment varied considerably as we travelled around the country, or perhaps it was our diagnosis that varied, according to extraneous happenings like occasional good news from Europe, a speech by the President forecasting further aid to Britain, or a sympathetic article in the Press by Dorothy Thompson, Walter Lippmann, or some other leader of opinion. When the Battle of Britain was at its height in the early autumn, our hopes soared, so wondrous was the genuine expression of American sympathy, until there came the inevitable reaction. We tried to keep our emotions in check and to understand the mentality responsible for the Isolationist campaign, then so vociferous.

As we looked out from the windows of our smooth-running trains on the lonely homesteads we realised anew how natural it was that people living two or three thousand miles from the Atlantic, found it difficult to enter into our problems so far away. They were engrossed in a continual battle with nature, the high cost of living, inadequate markets, disappointing crops and high transportation rates were their chief preoccupations. How were we to make real to them the prospect of dire disaster which confronted Europe? Was it surprising that they lent a ready ear to any Isolationist editorial? A two-line excerpt from an editorial in the *Chicago Tribune* serves to show the mental food presented to

<sup>1</sup> £18 15s. od. in English currency.

readers: "Those people in Europe have been warring together for the last nine hundred years: we should keep out of their squabbles." It sounded so plausible and so easy to do. There was no credit due to us if we thought differently in England, for we lived on the edge of a war-torn Europe.

By the time we reached San Francisco in April, 1941, we had taught ourselves not to indulge in wishful thinking. Perhaps we overestimated the strength of Isolationist opinion, but we certainly left the United States in a very depressed condition. We were convinced that half of the nation was determined to keep out of the conflict. Nothing in fact short of a political earthquake would bring America into the war. An American mother—who doubtless represented countless thousands—said to us in California: "We will supply you with every kind of armament. We have never felt prouder of our English ancestry. But we will never send our boys to be killed. Neither Hitler nor the Japs can get at us here; we shall stay out of the war." At the same time we had seen with our own eyes the increasing output of American factories; we had watched with deep satisfaction the growth of the gigantic aircraft works, near Seattle, the home of the Flying Fortresses, and in the great aircraft factories in Southern California. Whatever Americans thought, events might yet be too strong for them.

On one of our last days in the United States we listened to a speech of Mr. Churchill's; it was inspiring, dignified and sombre, in every way worthy of the moment. The editorial writer of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, a paper always friendly to the British cause, in appealing to the people of America, wrote: "Now it is fight or quit."

We spent our last evening on the American continent on the top of Nob Hill, San Francisco. We were anxious to see the Mark Hopkins Hotel, built since our last visit three years before. Its cocktail lounge on the top of the nineteenth floor, known as "The Top of the Mark," was regarded as one of the chief sights of the city. We had expected the usual pillared hall with jazz furniture and subdued lighting; instead we found ourselves in fairyland. The great circular lounge occupies the top floor of the hotel, with outer walls entirely of glass; it was like being in an enormous lighthouse. Around the windows were booths with sumptuous sofa seats, the glass was level with the chairs; as you sat at your table you got a complete panorama of beautiful San Francisco Bay, and the city spread out on its seven hills. Across the water were Berkeley and Oakland. We looked down on the wonder bridges, the largest in the world. We sat there spellbound and watched the sun setting beyond the Golden Gate through which we hoped to sail the following day. Gradually a myriad lights came out and through the semi-darkness there shone in a purple sky the new moon and Venus.

## CHAPTER VIII

### HONOLULU AND BEYOND

DEPRESSING HEADLINES GREETED OUR EYES WHEN WE CAME DOWN TO BREAKFAST on our last morning in San Francisco—"The Axis smashes through into Egypt." Public opinion certainly appeared to be moving towards a better appreciation of the perilous situation in the Mediterranean. It was not enough for America just



to deliver munitions to British ships on the Atlantic seaboard; there would have to be some sort of convoying.

We had never sailed the ocean with so unexpected a company of saloon passengers as we found on board the *Monterey* from San Francisco at the end of April. The majority of our fellow-travellers were brawny Westerners, who were being sent out by the American Government to construct the new air bases in Hawaii, Wake Island and Guam. The contract of these workmen stipulated that they should travel saloon. The drawback of being surrounded by cabins full of hilarious young men, who consumed vast quantities of beer at all hours, and who behaved as if the ship belonged to them, was certainly more than made up for by this practical demonstration that America was getting ready.

Our 250 workers were a fine and hefty lot, and we enjoyed discussing world problems with them. We sometimes wished, however, in the general interest that the smoking-room bar might be closed for stated periods and we wondered whether the *Monterey's* supply of beer would last out! By the afternoons some of our friends had reached the affectionate stage and were continuously shaking hands with one another and with us.

The first night out several of the members of the construction gang from adjoining tables, in the saloon, came over to us and said: "May we come and sit with you folks, while you eat? You're an ambassador, aren't you?" We were, of course, delighted though slightly taken aback, as we were thus enabled to get a close-up of the men who were going to put Uncle Sam's defences in order. As they sat down they gave us a kind of Hitlerian salute and there was cordial handshaking all round. Our friends said they were going to Wake Island and were determined to "make the earth fly" when they got there. One of them had been a stoker in the American Navy in the last world war, the other was a pro-British Irishman who took out his wife's photograph from his pocket and ruefully said that he had not seen her for six years. They talked good sense, and we were cheered to hear that they favoured all-out aid to Britain. The *maître d'hôtel* in the saloon, looked rather startled to see this hob-nobbing between Americans and Britons. For the next hour we worked hard answering all the questions that were fired at us in the hope that we might help to kill the myth of "British stand-offishness."

Apart from the American construction workers, there was only a small number of other passengers. One of the latter, Mr. Maude, had just come from Pitcairn Island with his wife and little son, where they had been detained eight months owing to the activities of a German raider. Pitcairn is the island inhabited by the descendants of the mutineers of H.M.S. *Bounty*. He was on his way to take up his position as British Resident in the Protectorate of Tonga which is ruled by Queen Solote. The seat of Government is at Tongatabu.

As we were entering Honolulu Bay we wished all good luck to our friends bound for Wake Island and have often thought of them since and wondered what happened to them. The arrival at Honolulu never loses its charm; the great volcanic hills of Oahu were capped with white clouds, and we watched from afar the lines of surf breaking over the reef of Waikiki Bay. As we neared Diamond Head, American planes circled around us, and there were many more signs of naval activity than there had been three years before. American war vessels were steaming out of Pearl Harbour. As we drew alongside the jetty the members of the familiar Royal Hawaiian Band, dressed in white, sang

melodiously. The representative of the hotel garlanded us with *leis*—necklaces of exotic and sweet-smelling flowers. Our weeks at Halekulani are a never-to-be-forgotten memory, a breathing space before another lecture tour. Had it not been for the war news it would have been Paradise, for Halekulani certainly lives up to its name, "House befitting Heaven." In a luxuriant tropical garden is the central hotel building, with wooden chalets dotted around. The garden runs down to a wide sandy beach, and one steps from the grassy lawn direct on to the shore with a wonderful view of Honolulu Bay. From our chalet we could watch through the rustling palms the surf riders at every hour of the day, and around us was nearly every variety of tropical shrub and tree. We had our meals under the intermeshed branches of the Hau tree, with its many-coloured blossoms, and the sun made little circles of light on our table. We were within a stone's throw of the breakers, and on the strip of palm-guarded lawn dividing us from the sea, birds of every description gathered and waited for crumbs to be thrown.

Every morning we used to watch the American Pacific Fleet doing its manœuvres. We would count as many as twenty warships, including aircraft carriers, and around the war vessels circled large 'planes. At every hour of the day and night, in fact, we heard the drone of aeroplanes, and found it very reassuring. Pearl Harbour is fitly called "The Gibraltar of the Pacific." America certainly seemed very much alive to possible eventualities and there was a great atmosphere of preparedness. The chief thing that struck one about Hawaii was the enormous number of Orientals there, above all, Japanese; in short, there were 150,000 Japanese, or more than a third of the total population and five times as numerous as the Chinese. In the street cars the majority of one's fellow passengers were extremely neat little Japanese girl stenographers. The younger generation of Japanese talked English among themselves.

At about that time I noticed a statement in the Press to the effect that the Hawaiian Japanese were all "very proud of their American citizenship," and a resolution was passed by their leaders to the effect that Hawaiian Japanese considered their first duty was to the land of their adoption. I hoped this was true, though I found myself imagining there were a good number of spies among them. One day I had my hair cut in the local barber's shop in Waikiki, with everything spotlessly clean, and the customers seated in white revolving dentists' chairs. The "barbers" were Japanese maidens dressed in white, and they certainly had butterfly fingers. Complete silence was observed.

War, of course, was a taboo subject in Honolulu, and you practically never heard it mentioned. But war seemed to be coming a bit closer, or at any rate, preparations for war. The third black-out was ordered, and searchlights were always playing after dark, while night-fighters patrolled the skies. We saw U.S. Army and Navy 'planes practising dive-bombing just above our hotel, hurtling down from the skies at 500 miles an hour as early as 4 a.m., and just missing the palms in the garden by a few yards.

"This morning" (I quote from my diary of this period) "a commentator in a local paper suggested that the Army was putting on this stunt specially in honour of a large Japanese liner out in the bay. . . . The place is swarming with U.S. sailors, dressed in white ducks, and wherever one looks out to sea one sees warships on the horizon. The only other place under the American flag where we saw anything like the number of men in uniform was at Savannah. They are tall

and well set-up young men. . . . We have been much excited about the news of Hess's flight to Scotland; it is very dramatic, and shows that behind the scenes there must be more dissension in Germany than we had dared to hope; it is the first important break-away from the Nazi Party since the war began. This story has created more interest than almost any other single war item since we have been in the U.S.A. and we have actually seen women reading the papers to-day!"

On Sunday, the 25th May, a service in memory of Queen Victoria's Birthday, was held in St. Andrew's American Episcopal Cathedral in Honolulu. A great Union Jack hung just above the pulpit, and the Bishop preached a very moving sermon. The specially selected Psalm was the forty-sixth and lesson, Isaiah 60. There were tears in many eyes, for we had been going through one of the war's blackest weeks. The day before, just as we were sitting down to lunch, we heard the ghastly news of the sinking of H.M.S. *Hood*, and we could hardly believe it. I had always been afraid that the two German Dreadnoughts might have some surprise in store for us, such as extra powerful armour-piercing projectiles, and feared that it meant our King George class might not be able to stand up to *Bismarck*. The news was almost unbearable, coming on top of the cables telling of the relentless headway made by the Nazi air-borne troops in Crete. But if our spirits had been low on Saturday, they soared three days later. To get my daily paper I went one morning through the garden before 7.0—it was being watered by the Japanese gardeners. I saw the huge red splash headline: "British sink the *Bismarck*." The naval experts in the Press had been writing latterly in a very depressing strain about the inferior armaments of British warships, and here was our rejoinder—the pride of the German Navy was now at the bottom of the sea.

We were very sorry to say good-bye to Honolulu, and still hope to return to Halekulani some day in a world of peace. It is always a grim business leaving a perfect climate and plunging straight into mid-winter in the temperate zone, as we were about to do. We sailed on the *Mariposa*, sister ship of the *Monterey*, for Pago Pago, one of America's colonial outposts, at 10 p.m. It was a marvellous tropical evening, and the vaulted verandah of the landing stage packed with a gay throng. The Pan-Pacific Union and other friends had sent us  *leis*, wishing us "*Aloha*," which means "Good-bye and come back again." The departure of the *Mariposa* caused a special amount of interest as it was the last important cruise of the season, and that night I noted in my diary: "Who knows when American pleasure-seekers will have the opportunity of another one? I should like to think that the presidential powers will be devoted to putting an end to these luxury cruises in war-time." There was only a handful of through passengers to New Zealand or Australia, for the *Mariposa* was packed with 250 "cruisites," who were sailing with us as far as Samoa, where they were joining another luxury steamer to take them back to California via Tahiti.

We lived in a pre-war atmosphere of *dolce far niente*. From 10 a.m. onwards the five gambling machines in the smoking-room were continuously rotating, and every now and then came the jingling sound of a niagara of coin when someone had won the jack-pot. It was the first time we had ever been on an American steamer where everyone dressed for dinner. The men appeared in faultlessly cut, silk-faced white "tuxedos" (dinner jackets); and this surprised us, because even at the smartest hotels in the United States, when the women donned the latest evening confections, their menfolk appeared in ordinary day clothes

The women wore startling gowns, an outward demonstration that the *couturières* of Chicago and New York were certainly independent of German-occupied Paris. At the table next to us in the saloon was a striking-looking American woman with head-dress exactly like Nefertete. One of the male "socialites" wore a black artificial carnation in his white dinner jacket.

Our first taste of the carefree life of the North American well-to-do in war-time, was at the end of August, 1940, when we had come straight from London: our last close-up of American civilisation was of the prosperous passengers on the *Monterey's* last pleasure cruise of the season at the end of May, 1941. Let me quote an impression or two from my diary:

"If I had not witnessed it with my own eyes, I could not have imagined a gathering of two or three hundred well-to-do Americans, entirely oblivious—anyhow to outward observation—of the perilous times in which we live. The members of the cruise were as light-hearted as any Riviera crowd at Monte Carlo in times of peace. It was an unbearable environment for the receipt of news of still another evacuation, this time from Crete. . . . Yesterday we spent our last day on American soil at Pago Pago in American Samoa, about eighty miles from Apia, in New Zealand Samoa. In the harbour the *Mariposa* met its sister-ship, the *Monterey*, on which we travelled to Honolulu a month ago, now on her return journey from Australia. Our 250 "cruisites," after a day's sight-seeing, were transferred to the *Monterey* and are now on their way to Tahiti, and go thence direct to Los Angeles. We were not sorry to say good-bye to them for the most part, as there was something so jarring in this endless gambling and daylong cocktail drinking. Now we have the boat practically to ourselves—there are only forty cabin passengers left.

"On our last morning I got into conversation with Mr. Cameron, editor of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, which has been championing the British cause in California. With him was a Mr. Miller, a very nice old boy, who remembered his father taking in the *Spectator* seventy years ago, and who still carries on the tradition. Cameron gave us rather reassuring information concerning the production of American bombers and tanks; he said it will be jumping ahead in the next two months, and by the autumn they will be delivering to the British all that we want, actually *delivering* the goods, both in the Red Sea and in Great Britain. The whole question depends on our being able to hold the Germans in the Middle East pending the arrival of these shipments. This, anyhow, is his point of view. Cameron is a very well-informed man and thinks that the modern American tanks and large bombers are very fine machines. When I asked him what could I tell people in Australia and New Zealand about America's entry into the war, he said: 'America is in the war now.'"

The journey from Honolulu to American Samoa is farther than from Liverpool to Newfoundland. Pago Pago, America's earliest colonial possession, is a dear little mountain-enclosed harbour—volcanic, vivid green, with palm trees on the mountain tops against the sky line. It is an important naval and air station, and there is a small village of Samoans; but only a few of the native thatched houses were left. For the most part corrugated iron roofs had been superimposed over the thatching, a sure concomitant of Western civilisation. The inhabitants are as attractive as they are in New Zealand Samoa; the women often wear a flower in their hair, and the men are dressed in *lava lavas*, a skirt-like piece of coloured cloth, wrapped round the waist, hanging down to the ankle.

A Samoan youth who spoke excellent English acted as our guide, and was much concerned about the results of the impact of Western civilisation on the island. He hoped to study medicine in British Fiji, so that he could help to save his people from "the effects of civilisation—tuberculosis, and venereal disease." Our Samoan friend told us that all the islanders were Christians and regular church-goers, and if the youngsters showed an inclination to stay away from church, "they were beaten by their fathers"! He said that all the Samoans prayed every day for Britain's victory.

We talked to several American soldiers and sailors, and found them, like many Europeans quartered in the tropics, bored by their surroundings. They longed for the fleshpots of their home-towns, and one of their main grievances was that nothing stronger than beer could be obtained locally. In peace-time they only spent a year and a half in the colony. So that temptation should be kept from the local garrison, the bar on our steamer was kept closed while we were in port, which was perhaps just as well. The Samoans were apprehensive about their future, for their little island was being drastically changed. Uncle Sam and his bulldozers were getting busy; a village had been removed, lock, stock and barrel, and on its site a sea-plane base was being erected. Here, as in the Philippines and in Panama, I was struck by the admirable manner in which the United States Government houses its garrisons in the tropics, with buildings and equipment much superior to anything I had seen in the British Empire.

Our next stopping place was Suva, Fiji, and we were back again in a country at war. As we drew alongside the quay we watched the Fijian police, picturesque with their fuzzy-wuzzy heads of black hair, white *sulus* (skirts) scalloped in points, police belts, and bare feet. On the landing-stage, New Zealand soldiers watched our arrival with interest. We were longing for news as we had had no bulletins for forty-eight hours, so we drove round to the office of the *Fijian Gazette*, where we read disquieting news concerning Vichy and Syria. After Honolulu the buildings and open spaces seemed tame, and the shops contained a deal of shoddy goods, though we were impressed by the general tidiness. The drawback for European civilisation in the South Pacific is the ubiquity of the galvanised-iron roof, the natives for the most part live in tin shanties, apparently the only material that will stand up to the termites.

The most beautiful thing we saw in Fiji was the Christian cemetery on the slope of an emerald green hillside; every grave and pathway was spick and span, the whole cemetery was aflame with colour, scarlet poinsettias, golden candle of God, frangipani, hibiscus, yellow alamanda and crotons. Up and down this hillside paradise ran grass paths, and the cemetery was kept in order by convicts in striped blue jerseys. It was worth coming to Fiji to get this vision of what a resting-place for the dead should be. There was a war-like atmosphere about Suva; trenches and dug-outs were being constructed in key places, and searchlight posts and gasometers were camouflaged. Meeting New Zealand soldiers at every turn gave us a friendly feeling.

Our steward was a German-American, indoctrinated, alas, with Goebbels's propaganda; we had several political talks with him and realised with sorrow how impossible it is to make any impression whatsoever on the Nazi-warped mentality. We experienced the same hopeless feeling that we had had two years before in talking with Storm Troopers in Berlin. The German mind was temporarily doped and each individual, parrot-like, repeated what he had been

told by the official propaganda machine. It was all very tragic and was a warning as to the difficulty of dealing with the German mind in a post-war era. Our steward said, that even if "The Leader" were beaten in this war, which he did not believe was possible, another Hitler would arise in twenty-five or thirty years to redress German grievances!

What an outlook for humanity!

## CHAPTER IX

### NEW ZEALAND—"GOD'S OWN COUNTRY"

MY FIRST SIGHT OF "GOD'S OWN COUNTRY" AFTER AN ABSENCE OF TWENTY-EIGHT years, showed the flash of the Auckland Lighthouse in the dawn of a bitter winter day in early June, 1941. We were glad to be at the end of our voyage and were ready for the strenuous weeks ahead. We felt exactly as if we were landing at some British port, and something in our inner beings was deeply stirred as we walked ashore in New Zealand, some 11,000 miles away from home and yet so like it in many ways. In no part of the world outside England has the British race so securely stamped its impress on a new land.

New Zealand seemed just as British as it had shown itself in 1913. Our only reminders that we were not in England were the Norfolk pines and tree ferns in the parks, the camellias and hydrangeas in flower in mid-winter, the roofed colonnades of the streets, the frequent use of corrugated iron. New Zealand's Expeditionary Force and the Suez Canal were some 8,000 miles away and there still were New Zealanders who did not realise that the war was approaching their front-door. There was a supposed black-out each night, but very different from what we had been accustomed to at home.

No country understands the art of welcoming the stranger better than New Zealand. The Department of Internal Affairs had sent a representative from Wellington, 400 miles away, to greet the passengers on our ship and to help us to make our plans. In the intervals between shaking hands with friends and talking to the Press, I briefly outlined our proposed tour. Two or three hours later the Government-run Tourist Association presented me with a neatly bound leather booklet, with the details of every day of our tour typed out. Printed information was supplied us, accompanied by illustrations, concerning those places which we were going to visit. Whether we were going by land, sea or air, by private car or taxi, complete details were furnished us as to our itinerary, accompanied by local maps, showing the exact route from our hotel, or private house, to our point of departure.

In many directions New Zealand had made great progress since I had visited it as a young man; but there was one thing which seemed unchanged and unchanging, the Grand Hotel at Auckland. Anything less like the hotels in the United States would have been impossible to conceive; it was an old-fashioned hostelry, transferred hither, as if by magic, from Bath or Tunbridge Wells. The lounges and public rooms could only have originated in Victorian England. After a year of American central heating we walked, with chattering teeth, through draughty passages to our old-world bedroom on the first floor.

We had reason every day to rejoice in the friendliness of the staff, from the arrival of morning tea with thin slices of bread-and-butter, the like of which we had not seen since London, and all brought, as a matter of course, by a pleasant housemaid. We revelled continually in the human touch. Instead of quaking as we approached the faultlessly attired red-nailed young ladies in control of the news-stands in American hotels, to purchase our postage stamps, we handed our letters to one of the benign assistants who presided over our destiny in the front hall office. She weighed the packages, attached stamps of the correct value, and charged the whole transaction to our account. The same hotel "boots" who was here in 1912 we found still in charge. The only innovations that I noticed were the loud speaker in the hall that announced callers, and the number of women smoking and sipping cocktails.

While it was true that there seemed too much "pleasure as usual," New Zealand was 100 per cent behind Great Britain, and shared her every emotion; the New Zealand Press, with its fine traditions, lost no opportunity of bringing home to its readers the perils which faced English-speaking civilisation. When we were in the Middle West of the United States we were able to understand how remote European problems can appear from a distance of 5,000 miles. It was a great tribute to New Zealand's essential unity of outlook with Great Britain that the hardy farmers and business men could identify themselves so completely with the ideals of a nation 11,000 miles away. New Zealanders still refer to Great Britain as "home"—and a journey "home" for them means crossing half the world!

Our visit took place shortly after the depressing news concerning the evacuation of Crete and Greece. A considerable number of New Zealanders had been casualties in the Mediterranean operations, and never once did we hear recriminations against the British conduct of the war. Actually at the time of our visit further reinforcements were leaving for the Middle East. Despite the fact that conscription did not apply to them, a large number of Maoris had joined up. No subjects of the Crown are more loyal. The happy relations existing between New Zealanders of European descent and their Maori fellow-subjects is a great tribute to British rule.

We visited some of the Maori villages in the Thermal region of Rotorua. At Whakarewarewa a plump Maori woman, dressed in bright red, acted as our guide; she spoke correct and fluent English. Her husband had been in Crete, and she showed us with pride letters and cables she had received from him; he had described to her an occasion in Greece when the Germans could easily have broken through but the Maoris went over the top with native war cries and this was too much for them! The little village of Whakarewarewa, with a total population of 360, had contributed sixty men; when my wife said how dreary it must be without their menfolk, our Maori friend replied: "We could not try to keep them back, they were so longing to go and fight." As we wandered around the village we saw women whose sons had been killed, or were missing in Crete.

Whakarewarewa is a fantastic place, where you may see the Maoris leading their own independent life in little wooden houses, with streams of smoke rising from the geysers in their back gardens. Columns of white smoke appear from all sorts of unexpected places; it is an uncanny spot and one feels that one is treading on a thin crust of the earth's surface, with mysterious grumblings and

growlings going on underneath. Woe betide the traveller who wanders about in the dark without a guide. The night before we came there, a stray visitor had fallen into one of the gurgling pools of boiling mud after dark, and when rescued was badly injured and in a critical condition. People who fell into geysers, we were told, usually die from shock and not from their injuries.

The Maoris make great use of their hot pools; they bathe morning and evening, in all weathers. At the time of our visit, with a temperature well below freezing point, we saw fat females, two of them with their babies in their arms, standing in the hot water—"in their birthday suits," as our guide explained. She told us that men and women bathe together, and there were no local byelaws with regard to the wearing of bathing costumes. The Maoris are eloquent speakers and take to platform oratory as a duck to water; the most fluent orator I have ever heard in the Antipodes was a Maori politician.

New Zealand is one of the most democratic countries in the world, and has been in the forefront in introducing advanced social legislation, so that the general level of well-being is high. The Government takes a fatherly interest in many aspects of life, from the provision of an allowance for motherhood, to running a trout hatchery, where 6,000,000 young trout are produced each year. There can be few parts of the world in which for the payment of 25s. the fisherman can obtain a six months' licence and get such excellent sport; the only condition attached, I understand, is a limit of ten fish per day.

A Labour Government was in power at the time of our visit. Certain elements of New Zealand labour had regarded the war of 1914-1918 as a capitalistic struggle, but on the present occasion the nation was 100 per cent behind the war, which was regarded as "a righteous crusade." Political feelings were very bitter. The Opposition criticised some of the legislation passed by the Government; how, they asked, could New Zealand Labour, with a forty-hour week, meet oversea competition?

New Zealand has the lowest infantile mortality in the world, largely owing to the pioneer work of Sir Frederick Truby King, whose achievements are a lasting tribute to his memory. I was glad to have the opportunity of visiting the lovely hilltop garden, outside Wellington, occupied by the Karatani Hostel for ailing babies. This is a fitting memorial to this great man; for there in the midst of the grounds is a monument to Truby King under which he and his wife lie buried. If any country in the world should have a satisfactory health record it is New Zealand, where babies are given a better start in life than in any other country, but alas, the enlightened methods devoted to infant welfare are not continued in after-life.

At the Ministry of Health I learnt some disturbing facts. Fifty-two per cent of New Zealand's school children suffer from some physical defect, dental caries being one of the commonest forms. I was told that, in a recent football team of young New Zealanders sent to Canada, almost every member of the team was the possessor of a dental plate. It is dangerous for a layman to deal with questions of diet, but the reason for this state of affairs was stated by medical experts to be the predilection of New Zealanders for strong tea, sugar and too many refined starches, and not sufficient food containing vitamin "B." The *per capita* consumption of milk was surprisingly low, and this is incomprehensible in a land with some of the best dairy herds in the world.



On the lecture platform I referred to the problem of the empty cradle and the urgent need for youth migration. In these remarks I had the hearty backing of the Press. It is always dangerous for the visitor to criticise local institutions, but New Zealanders took my remarks in good part. They realised that I had a deep affection for their wonderful little country, which I fervently hope will one day have a population of 15,000,000 healthy and happy citizens.

Many New Zealanders are fully alive to this dangerous trend in the national statistics, among them the members of the Dominion Settlement Association. They are seeking to arouse public opinion, not only to the need of bringing about a change of heart in the country's women towards motherhood, but also to advocate a carefully prepared scheme of mass youth immigration after the war. It has been suggested that New Zealand should be proclaimed as "a haven for the orphans of Europe," of whom there are said to be 10,000,000. There are 423,500 inhabited dwellings in the country and there seems to be no reason to doubt that, over a period of years, half a million children could be taken into existing homes.

We were staying at Government House, Wellington, with Sir Cyril and Lady Newall, when we received one of the most dramatic news items of the war. Germany's attack on Russia! Russia was now to be on our side. Sir Cyril Newall, who had commanded the Royal Air Force in the Battle of Britain, had only recently arrived from Europe. Naturally the Russian campaign formed the subject of conversation at every dinner party. It was less than two years since we had been in Russia, and there were others also familiar with its people and conditions. I remember one particular dinner party at the house of Sir Harry Batterbee, the British High Commissioner, where a dozen of us were discussing Russia's prospects. Only one of those present thought that the German attack could be held; whereas my own horoscope was that the Nazis would be in Leningrad and Moscow in six weeks, and that Russia could not hold out for long after that!

The news of the German attack recalled a talk which we had with Doctor Rauschnig in London at the end of July, 1940, just before we left England. He had told us he was convinced that Germany would attack Russia, although at that moment nothing seemed more unlikely. I remember saying to him at the time, that I was afraid he was indulging in wishful thinking, but the Doctor stood to his guns—one of those rare war-time prophecies that have since come true.

During the six weeks' tour in New Zealand we were only able to visit Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin, but nowhere would it have been possible to find more cordial audiences with a greater appreciation of the vital importance to the world of the British Commonwealth's close co-operation with the United States. Our programme was crowded with civic receptions, broadcasts and other addresses to the branches of the Overseas League, the English-Speaking Union, and New Zealand's very active Travel Club, and other gatherings. The most important function was the reception given by the New Zealand Government as a tribute to the mission on which I was engaged, at Parliament Buildings, Wellington. The Acting Prime Minister, Mr. Walter Nash, presided in the absence of Mr. Fraser, the Premier, who was in Europe, and made a very stimulating speech on the world mission of the British Commonwealth and on the vital importance of our close co-operation with the United States.

## CHAPTER X

### AUSTRALIA AFTER 28 YEARS

A BUGLE WOKE US ON THE MORNING OF 16TH JULY AND SHORTLY AFTERWARDS we steamed through Sydney Heads into the wonderful harbour which holds its own with any rival. While it lacks San Francisco's background of mountains, it is more attractive as far as the centre of the city is concerned, as the beautiful Botanic Gardens run down to the water's edge. Perfect Australian winter weather greeted us, and the skyline of fourteen-storied buildings as seen from the ship reminded us of America.

On arrival in Sydney I found a sensitiveness to criticism that I had not met with before in Australia. Friends who came to meet us on the landing stage had read cabled reports of statements I had made to New Zealand audiences, on the urgent need for increased immigration and concerning the menace of the "empty cradle." They wanted to warn me to be cautious in my remarks to the Press because certain journals took a delight in criticising British visitors. But their warnings came too late; I had already been interviewed by half-a-dozen journalists, and had stated my views frankly. I said that if Hitler were to be defeated, the British Commonwealth would have to adopt equally efficient methods.

In an all-out life-and-death struggle against Nazi Totalitarianism, there could be little time for "racing as usual." I also said that an empty Australia was a danger, not only to the British Commonwealth, but to the world, for in common with many Australian friends I hoped by the end of the century that the Commonwealth would possess a population of 25,000,000, and would remain a great buttress of English-speaking civilisation in the South Pacific. A few days later, a member of the New South Wales Parliament drew the attention of the House to the remarks of an English lecturer who had dared to say that Australia was "a danger to the British Empire"!

So great was Australian hospitality, that for our first five days we had not even time to open our mail, and the telephone never stopped ringing. My six months in Australia in 1912-13, during which I visited all the six States, had left me with a deep affection for the Commonwealth and its people and had prepared me for Australian hospitality.

The sun was shining as it might have done at home in June, as we drove off in the car provided for us during our stay by the Government of New South Wales and the kiosks were ablaze with spring flowers. When we got to our suite at the hotel it was filled with spring flowers. We worked harder than we had ever worked, even in America, in our attempt to carry out the programme that had been arranged for us and we spoke to every type of audience.<sup>1</sup> Nowhere could two visitors from Great Britain have been made to feel more welcome.

As we were due in India by the beginning of November we were only able to spend six weeks in Australia, confining ourselves to Sydney, Melbourne and

<sup>1</sup> Among the meetings we addressed in Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide were Civic Receptions, branches of the Overseas League, English-Speaking Union, Royal Empire Society, Victoria League, Millions Club, Commercial Travellers' Association, Women Journalists, Workers at Canteens and Hostels and 1,500 members of the Wesleyan Church at Melbourne and several broadcasts.

Adelaide and an interval of a few days at Kiama. On my previous visit I had lectured in every part of the country and to every type of audience and had got to know the life of the small towns "out back" and the rural communities; from the north of Queensland to the south of Tasmania, and from Sydney in the east to Albany in the west.

Australia was still relying on the voluntary system of enlistment to provide the recruits required by her Expeditionary Force in North Africa; many Australians, in fact, feared that the voluntary system was breaking down. The introduction of conscription, however, still seemed far off and was not regarded as practical politics. Public opinion was undoubtedly whole-heartedly behind the national war effort. To the majority of the Nation the war still seemed far away, and nothing short of the struggle approaching Australian waters was likely to effect so great a revolution as the introduction of conscription.

"Australians have become accustomed to the unchallenged supremacy of the British Navy" (I noted in my diary), "and they can hardly bring themselves to realise how great is the Nazi challenge to the British way of life. Large sections of the population are fully alive to the danger, however, and we have continually met wives and mothers who talk of their menfolk at Tobruk or of their experiences in Greece or Crete; but it is depressing to watch the great efforts being made at Sydney, to get the urgently needed recruits by present methods with such poor results. This is a subject which, I am told, has caused much bitterness in the ranks of the A.I.F. The principle of 'pleasure as usual' is still deeply ingrained and many pages in the newspapers are devoted to chronicling sport. Fortunately many far-seeing people are giving anxious thought to the country's post-war problems; the Australian Broadcasting Commission has been arranging an important series of talks. One of Australia's most urgent questions is undoubtedly how to populate her vast empty spaces. Informed opinion varies in its estimate of the continent's absorptive capacity, but even conservative authorities think that Australia should have a minimum of 25,000,000 inhabitants."

Australia, like the United States and Canada, has its "dust-bowls." An organised post-war scheme of migration should entail the setting up of a board of national development, as haphazard immigration will no longer be possible. Vast projects of irrigation and reafforestation will be essential, for trees have been ruthlessly destroyed as in North America, and science will have to be called in to tackle the scarcity of water in the centre of the continent, the Commonwealth's greatest problem. Over ninety per cent of the population is of British origin, and there are many who hope that the Motherland will continue to provide a stream of immigrants as in the past. This seems hardly likely, however, for there will be many calls on Britain's man-power in the post-war years.

We followed the opening phases of the Russo-German campaign with intense interest; at times it seemed as if the commonly held view that Russia could not stand up to the German onslaught would be borne out by events. We realised to the full that Germany's Eastern campaign was relieving pressure on Great Britain and preventing the possibility of a Nazi invasion; but in view of the stupendous blows under which the Red Army was reeling, we wondered whether it would be possible for the Soviet Forces to keep on withdrawing, and at the same time preserving their morale. Australia was completely confident of the ultimate victory of the British Commonwealth, even without the assistance

of the United States; but, as in Great Britain, there were many who indulged in wishful thinking as late as 1941, and who underestimated the extent to which Hitler had harnessed the enslaved millions of Europe to the Nazi war machine. In official circles, the Japanese danger was either underestimated or ignored. On 22nd July an important member of the Commonwealth Government said to me, that, in his opinion, Japan was bluffing, and would not be prepared to take on Great Britain and America.

Between the hectic rush of Sydney and Melbourne we escaped for a few days to Kiama, seventy-five miles south of the former. Kiama has one of the best climates in the world, and is reached by a primitive train, which reminded me of my childhood days in Ireland. The guard was dressed in ordinary clothes and donned a grey felt hat, being presumably too democratic to wear uniform, the symbol of servitude.

"The friendly inhabitants" (as my diary puts it) "live in one-storied tin-roofed houses; it is tragic that local architecture is so bad, we sigh for the neat countryside buildings of Sweden or Denmark. The great feature of Kiama is the coral tree sometimes growing in clumps on the hillside with its twisted bare branches, carrying clusters of large blossoms, scarlet against the blue sky. We find it difficult to realise that this is the Australian mid-winter, there are flowers everywhere, and wild arum lilies in the ditches. . . . The war seems very far away; we never see anyone listening to the war news, though they all turn on the wireless for the racing results! We love our walks and frequently hear the kookaburras (laughing jackasses) quarrelling; a picture of a kookaburra, in fact, appears on one of Australia's postage stamps, with its long beak like a kingfisher. There is an old lady in a tin house who gives these birds scraps of meat at tea-time, and we watch them sitting on the telegraph posts waiting for their repast.

"The postman goes his rounds on horseback, and this morning we saw two small girls, under ten, riding pillion on a bareback horse down the grassy lanes."

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Government House, Melbourne, is an enormous building situated in the centre of a large public park adjoining the Botanical Gardens. The weather was bitterly cold and we longed for American central heating; but what was lacking in external warmth was more than made up for by the extraordinary kindness of our hosts, Sir Winston and Lady Dugan, and during a very busy week they provided us with a home-like and resting background. We had a huge Victorian room looking out into a large garden with magnolias and fruit trees in blossom, with the great four-poster bed and little gay chintz curtains round it. Nothing could have exceeded the hospitality of Melbourne.

Adelaide, our next stopping-place, though smaller than Sydney and Melbourne, is one of the best laid-out cities in the British Empire. It has a beautiful situation and owes much to Light,<sup>1</sup> its founder; he was a town planner a hundred years before his time, who despite opposition insisted that the town should be laid out on the site he had chosen and in accordance with his drawings. Amid a round of engagements we had little time for sightseeing, but one afternoon a kind friend took us to the Koala (Teddy Bear) Farm, a diminutive zoo in the wood.

During the day the koalas are somnolent; they look like plump grey muffs, and are about the size of a small baby. Our fingers sank into their deep and soft

<sup>1</sup> William Light, son of Captain Francis Light, see p. 82.

fur. In its drowsy condition the keeper plucked one from its tree and placed it in my wife's arms; he clung to her, his little paws around her neck, and we walked about the grounds, my wife hugging the little sleepy koala and the koala hugging her. When the proprietor gave me a mother koala and her small baby to hold, I feared that having two koalas to look after simultaneously would be too much of a responsibility, but the baby clung contentedly to his mother's back. The combined weight of mother and son was considerable! Koalas were once so easy to kill that they were almost exterminated. Fortunately a fair number of koalas have recently been born in captivity so the species will not become extinct.

Two important results of the war in Australia were that the Commonwealth had become more conscious of its neighbours to the north, and had realised afresh the supreme importance of the development of secondary industries. In the first world war Australia began to develop these secondary industries, but there had been a great speeding-up since September, 1939, and the Australian Imperial Force was in 1941 largely independent of British munitions, since aircraft, tanks and heavy guns were being manufactured in the country. Rapid progress was being made in shipbuilding, especially in South Australia, where the Premier, Mr. T. Playford, described to me the part his Government was playing in furthering this important industry. It was an impressive story. In two years Australia, without any previous shipbuilding experience, had laid the foundations for an industry which may one day equal that of the Clyde. Thanks also to the foresight of the Government of South Australia, the rapid growth of the town of Whyalla, in a waterless and arid zone, showed what can be accomplished in an emergency. Physical obstacles were ignored and an efficient water supply was brought by pipe lines from the Murray River, over 300 miles away. Whyalla already had a population of 6,000 and vessels of nearly 10,000 tonnage, built by Australian workers, were being launched from the slips. True, the Australian workers had the assistance of a handful of engineers and technicians from Scotland, but this in no way detracts from the scale of their achievement.

The war and the attendant lack of shipping were quickening the pace of Australian industrialisation. A nation that owned a continent could not be satisfied merely to play the role of a primary producer for Great Britain. The bitter experience gained in the slump years had been taken to heart, and the world depression had brought home the danger to a nation of having all its eggs in one basket. In those unhappy days no one wanted Australian beef, mutton or wool, and the local market was not large enough to purchase the output of Australian farms. The establishment of secondary industries was not only a vital measure of defence, which aimed at making Australia largely self-contained, but was providing an increased market for Australian farm produce. Australians regretfully admitted that the establishment of secondary industries would in the post-war years present Great Britain with a difficult problem; they hoped that perhaps a partial solution might be found in the organisation of carefully planned mass migration of suitable British youths.

This growth of secondary industries was responsible for the country's increased interest in her Asiatic neighbours; for when munitions would be no longer required, Eastern Asia would provide the nascent industries with peace-time markets near at home. Australia was cultivating direct contact with her neighbours; she already had diplomatic representation in the United States and

Japan, and an emissary was actually on his way to Chungking, the war-time capital of China. In the summer of 1941 a party of Australian journalists had recently made a tour by air of the Netherlands East Indies and Singapore to discuss defence and common problems. The Commonwealth was undoubtedly becoming "Asia conscious" and, thanks largely to the enterprise of the Dutch shipping companies, many Australians were acquainted with their northern neighbours, and Dutch residents from Indonesia were visiting Australia in search of a temperate climate near at hand. The recent defence talks in Singapore and Batavia had reinforced the lessons of geography, and given Australians in the face of a common danger a sense of community of interest, not only with the Netherlands East Indies, but with the British colonial territories in South-East Asia.

Thirty years ago the United States was more or less *terra incognita* to Australians, but in the previous quarter of a century there had been an ever-growing traffic across the Pacific. Many Australians visited Great Britain by way of North America, with the result that her people were much better informed about the United States and Canada than Americans and Canadians were about Australia. The country was increasingly looking northwards across the Pacific and the United States was finding a profitable market for her automobiles and manufactures "down under." The "Kingdom of Hollywood" also stretched its tentacles to the Antipodes.

A movement had recently been started, in addition to the work of the English-Speaking Union since the last war, to promote closer Americo-Australian relations. The threat of war with Japan had made the people realise that the policy of a "White Australia" was no longer dependent solely on the Royal Navy, but also on American sea-power. The enthusiastic welcome given to units of the American Fleet in Australian waters was an admission that the Commonwealth realised she was a partner in the English-speaking world and her people were convinced that the United States would never tolerate an alien invasion of her continent.

There still seemed to be considerable jealousy between the six States, and local patriotism, natural in view of past history, was more marked than in the Canadian Provinces. The disadvantages of the States having different railway gauges forty years after Federation, especially in war-time, was very obvious. On the most important railway journey on the continent, between Sydney and Melbourne, a distance of 500 miles, passengers and freight have to be moved from train to train at the border. To standardise the railway gauges would cost £60,000,000, and sooner or later that expenditure will have to be incurred, although the problem is, perhaps, not so urgent to-day owing to the development of air travel and the construction of trans-continental highways connecting the Northern Territory with the neighbouring States.

Our last week-end in Australia was spent with Lord and Lady Gowrie in Admiralty House, where the Governor-General resides when in Sydney; formerly occupied by the Admiral commanding the Australian station. In mid-winter we woke up to a wonderful view with the sloping gardens running down to the water's edge, bearing coral trees in bloom, Moreton Bay figs, palms, and beneath these, on the grassy banks, narcissi, daffodils, primulas, stocks and grape hyacinths. Admiralty House is in North Sydney, close to the gigantic suspension bridge, the largest in the British Empire. The house is long, low and old-fashioned, with a deep verandah, and the garden was one of the most beautiful we had

seen in our wanderings, for Lady Gowrie, as a gardener, is an enthusiast. It was a sad moment for Australia when Lord Gowrie came to an end of his fourteen years' tenure, first as Governor of South Australia and New South Wales, and subsequently as Governor-General. I never heard a word of criticism of the Governor-General or of Lady Gowrie, and small wonder, for it would be impossible to find a couple better suited for carrying out their high office.

When staying at Admiralty House, we met several officers of the Royal Navy, whose ships were in harbour. They were fresh from heartrending experiences during the evacuation of Greece and Crete. The impossible had been expected of them, and they had achieved the impossible; they had "been through hell" and their faces and bodies bore evidence to the fact. At that time the controversy as to the relative merits of sea and air power had not yet been decided. Germany had evidently concentrated on her air force and her submarines, and even before the sinking of H.M.S. *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* there were many experts who seemed to fear that the day of the large battleship was done. It must have been a difficult experience for sailors, brought up in the tradition of the influence of sea power on history, to find the very central point of their belief challenged. British strategy was based on the superiority of the Royal Navy. If after Crete, doubts were sometimes expressed as to the ability of a modern warship to stand up to aerial attack, it was not to be wondered at.

## CHAPTER XI

### A MONTH IN JAVA

WE MADE THE JOURNEY FROM SYDNEY TO JAVA ON A MODERN DUTCH MOTOR vessel of the K.P.M. Line which has played an important role in popularising the Netherlands East Indies, and making Australia better acquainted with her northern neighbours.

The black-out regulations were strictly enforced, and although we were allowed to keep our port-holes open, the electric light was switched off in the cabins at 8 p.m., but we soon got accustomed to undressing in the dark. The voyage brought home to one the size of Australia; travelling by a fast modern motor liner we were skirting the eastern coast from Sydney to Cape York—as far as from Liverpool to Newfoundland—and this took us five nights and four days. For over 1,000 miles we went through the Channel, between the Great Barrier Reef and the beautiful and mountainous Queensland coast—very tricky navigation, as there are many hidden shoals and coral reefs. Our last sight of Australian territory was of Booby Island, near Cape York.

The passengers were for the most part British subjects returning to Singapore; we have often wondered since what befell them. In addition there was the usual cross-section of ocean travellers, amongst them an attractive young Burmese woman, who sang old English songs very delightfully; Dutch business men, Government officials, Australian airmen going to Singapore, and the inevitable beachcomber to be met in these Southern seas, a very decent fellow at heart but possessed of a weak will and an uncontrollable thirst. There were several British business men on their way back to North China, convinced that Japan could not win. The swimming pool was the centre of attraction, chiefly

patronised by the Australian airmen, fine physical specimens, who ragged together from early morning till evening; they would slip round an unsuspecting comrade, enjoying his glass of iced beer, and would fling him into the water, much to the amusement of the spectators.

Our first call was at Macassar, in the Celebes Islands, famed for Macassar oil, and presumably responsible for the introduction of the word "antimacassar" into the English language. Macassar has several times been raided by the Allies since the Japanese occupation, and we hope it has not suffered too much damage, for it is a very attractive tropical town with a delightful seventeenth-century Dutch walled fort, well-built Government offices, open spaces with exotic vegetation, and native quarters much tidier than those of many other colonial possessions.

The Dutch residents had instilled their love of bicycles into the inhabitants. The streets afforded a colourful pageant, owing to the brilliant garments of the men and women. The chief means of conveyance was the excellent little rickshaw-tricycle, somewhat like the delivery tricycles used by tradesmen at home; in front of the machine was a bath-chair in which two people sat. The population was very mixed, containing every type of South-East Asiatic humanity, with Malays, Chinese and Indians predominating. Many of the shops were owned by Bombay merchants.

During a long drive in the neighbourhood of Macassar we never saw a single European. The peasants live in attractive dwellings, somewhat like Swiss chalets, but with thatched roofs; they were built of bamboo and rested on stilts, about five feet off the ground, presumably on account of insects and vermin. There were no window panes, and from behind the bamboo mullions the inmates would stare out at us, as if from behind prison bars. Part of the bamboo walls were painted blue or other bright colours. The family possessions are kept underneath the houses, and fighting cocks strut proudly on the baked earth, for the inhabitants are as keen cock-fighters as the population of French Martinique. The houses stand in the midst of waving groves of coconut palm and bamboo. Beyond the villages are the endless paddy-fields and in muddy river water buffaloes rest, with their snouts and ears above the water line. Far overhead plane vultures, and on the dykes dividing the paddy-fields white ibis stand motionless.

In Macassar were many beggars with distorted limbs, displaying their twisted joints in order to move the heart of the passer-by. A boy, for instance, without arms and only one leg, had a small pouch in his singlet which served as a receptacle for coins, and in the villages there were lepers covered with sores, also suing for alms. As we sipped a cooling drink on the verandah of the hotel, before returning to the ship, the local Sultan dashed by in a car, his bodyguard sitting alongside the chauffeur, with a red spear resting on the footboard.

We next stopped at Sourabaya, the chief naval base in the N.E.I., a great modern port, where the construction of patrol vessels, minesweepers, and torpedo-boats was taking place. There were endless formalities when passing the Customs, and in connection with the currency regulations. War-time travelling from country to country is no easy matter, and at the time we could not help feeling that greater consideration might have been paid to members of an Allied nation, especially considering that the Queen of Holland and Princess Juliana were sheltering, and welcome, on British soil. It was only when we finally left Java that the reason for the strict precautions was explained to us, including the very



thorough searching of our persons, and the endless visits to police stations, every time we moved from place to place. These regulations were in reality directed against the Japanese, who were still regarded as subjects of a "friendly nation"—but every foreigner had to submit to them. There had been considerable activity in rounding up Fifth Columnists in the Netherlands East Indies. I was informed that 300 Dutch who were known to be supporters of the Nazis had been incarcerated, and after Hitler's attack on Holland the local Germans had also been interned.

We arrived at Samarang twelve days after leaving Sydney, and were impressed by the admirable layout of this tropical town. Our destination was the hill station of Kopeng, a drive of thirty-five miles, and on our way we motored past an almost continuous succession of native villages. The population for the most part was neatly dressed and looked cheerful. The Dutch administration has certainly built admirable highways, and all the way we encountered cyclists, riding cheek by jowl, little governess traps drawn by ponies, which reminded me of my boyhood, motor cars and ox-carts, backed by purple-blue volcanic mountains, up to 11,000 feet in height.

Java teems with human life; it is one of the most thickly populated countries in the world. An island which is half the size of New Zealand, it has a population of 50,000,000 as against New Zealand's 1,300,000! On every drive we saw an unending stream of human beings exactly like the ceaseless procession of ants on every rural path throughout the country. Our first week was spent at Kopeng, 2,500 feet above sea level. British and Dutch flags flew above the swimming pool, and there in the lounge of the hotel was a large portrait of Mr. Churchill which served to beat up contributions for the local Spitfire Fund; otherwise the war seemed very remote.

We resented the long menus with two or three meat courses. For the first few days we had no war news. The hotel guests seemed quite oblivious to the war. It was intolerable not knowing how things were going, and we had never felt so cut off; on some days we did not even manage to get hold of a Dutch paper. The only news I could gather from studying the headlines was that the R.A.F. were fighting in Russia. Later, however, we got to know some of the Dutchmen staying in the hotel, they were friendly and spoke excellent English, and with their aid we were able to hear the new American broadcast from San Francisco.

The native villages were picturesque. The inhabitants dwell in tiled houses in the midst of banana-groves, and the owners spend endless hours squatting in front of their doors, chatting. In the hill districts men and women serve as beasts of burden, and a couple of men are able to carry surprisingly large loads by means of a pole balanced on the shoulders.

The women do their full share; we passed endless processions of them panting up steep hills with baskets full of vegetables on their heads, or large panniers on their backs as in Italy. The great majority of the people are Muslim; they had formerly been Hindus, but we saw no outward sign of religion except the Christian missions.

Within a mile or two of the main high road is unspoilt Java. A narrow mud path serves as the track to the village, and the main street is flanked by one-storied dwellings with tiled roofs and walls made of coco-nut matting. The Javanese are very fond of flowers; rows of petrol tins, gay with blossom, are placed round

the baked mud courtyards, and here the life of the family is carried on. The mothers, their babies strapped to their backs, never stop working. The favourite pastime of the small boys was playing with live and painted pigeons, with a curious contraption tied to their tails, and each owner painted his bird a different colour. A Dutch friend explained that this mysterious thing was a whistle, so that when their owners threw the birds into the air, their flight made a whistling sound.

Outside the houses we often came upon groups of men and women sitting round the ovens of itinerant vendors; savoury-smelling dishes were served on improvised tables; evidently the communal kitchen was popular, and reduced the labour of the overworked housewife. Every inch of soil is cultivated and the villages are surrounded by terraced paddy-fields or maize, tobacco and banana plantations. Off the beaten track one came across much dirt and poverty, as the standard of living is low and the ratio of illiteracy high. It was difficult for the visitor not speaking Malay, to ascertain how far the population was politically-minded; according to Dutch friends there was no Home Rule movement similar to the political aspirations of British India, but this impression was not confirmed by other observers. The Javanese certainly appear to be a happy people and take the cares of life lightly; most of the small trade in the country is done by the Chinese.

The Dutch attitude to racial colour differs from that of the British and the American, which probably accounts in part for Dutch success as administrators. There has undoubtedly been much inter-marriage, but instead of treating the coloured progeny as social outcasts, as is done in the United States and in other English-speaking countries, the mixed population adopts the language and ways of living of the ruling race. Several coloured "Dutchmen" talked with pride of The Hague, and the time when they would return "to the land of their ancestors." In the hotels and restaurants we frequently saw families of mixed descent, and military officers undoubtedly of mixed parentage, all consorting on a basis of complete equality with the white community.

The news from Russia was ominous. The Germans were at the doors of the Crimea, and we wondered anxiously whether the Russian armies would be able to remain intact in face of these continual retreats. We were given graphic accounts of the shooting of eighteen young Dutchmen by the Nazis earlier in the year, with a view to terrorising the population of Holland. The young men were first whipped, according to our informants, till they fainted, and after being revived with cold water were then shot—small wonder that the local Dutch had vowed vengeance against Germany. Large V-signs were on the outside of the hotels and in all the important buildings, in addition to the universal photographs of Queen Wilhelmina, Mr. Churchill also looked down on us. On the outside of the hotel at Djokjakarta was flying a flag with the Dutch colours on one side and the Union Jack on the reverse, while the newspapers carried a full service of news from London, though alas, in Dutch. There was no question where the sympathies of the population lay.

The wonderful ruins of Borobudur are on the way to Djokjakarta. A huge stupa or carved pyramid crowns a little hill, somewhat like a miniature Acropolis, which lies at the foot of a great range of volcanic mountains; it is a monument rather than a temple, covered with bas-reliefs describing the life of Buddha. Borobudur, the Hindu equivalent of the Elgin marbles, is entirely unspoiled and

is right out in the country. We looked across a plain of waving palms to the mountains, and in this remote spot we had the sensation of being linked up with a Hindu civilisation which no longer exists in Indonesia to-day. We were lucky to have the ruins entirely to ourselves, except for the Javanese boy who picked flowers for us. We rejoiced in the absence of hordes of tourists and loquacious guides, which are usually one's fate at the Parthenon or at the Pyramids. There was a very definite advantage in having a guide who could only speak Malay; the only other animate beings on the hill-top were the glistening butterflies and the lizards.

As there was no Anglican Church at Djokjakarta we went to the Roman Catholic Church of St. Anthony for High Mass, at 8 a.m. On our way the sun grilled down on us, even at this early hour, and what we saw made a deep impression on us. There is a Theological Training College in connection with the church; a wonderful choir of young native deacons, and a dozen Dutch priests, dressed in white, assisted at the celebration. On one side of the aisle were pews for the Europeans, and for those Javanese who preferred seats, on the other side, on a great wicker matting, as used in a Muslim mosque, squatted every type of inhabitant, from coffee-coloured Javanese to Chinese with European blood. There was a high percentage of men and I have never seen a more reverent congregation. Although many of the worshippers were quite poor, they were clean and looked self-respecting, and after the sights of dirt and degradation we had witnessed in the native quarter, it was encouraging to see such a congregation. White and coloured folk mingled together as they went up to the altar to receive the Sacrament.

One Sunday afternoon in Bandoeng, as we were walking through a large park which is popular with the local residents, we heard music in the distance and saw a crowd of white-coated Javanese listening. It was a service held by the local Salvation Army, conducted by two male officers and by a Dutchwoman, assisted by a dozen Javanese girl Salvationists, looking very neat in their white tunics. They clapped their hands and shook their tambourines in time with the tune, and one of the Javanese teachers read the verses of the hymn aloud in Malay before it was sung by the rest. The audience was quiet and attentive. A few yards away, round the sides of the park, was a small canal, full of rushing water, in which young men and boys were bathing. If the few Christian services that we attended in Java are typical of the population as a whole, there would still appear to be fertile soil for Christian teaching.

The town of Bandoeng, where we spent a fortnight, prides itself in being called "the Queen of Eastern mountain cities." It is situated on a plateau in Western Java, and wherever one goes there are glimpses of far-off, ethereal volcanic cones. The town has a population of 20,000 Europeans, as many of the colonial officials settle down there when they retire. Bandoeng shows what a tropical town can be, and the Dutch are rightly proud of their handiwork. The Government Departments and commercial buildings in modern style are well suited to their surroundings.

Nowhere, apart from California and Honolulu, had we seen such delightful private houses. It was surprising, in the midst of this European environment, suddenly to come across ramshackle native villages immediately at the back of leading thoroughfares. In the native quarters solicitous mothers, searching their children's heads for insects as efficiently as do the monkeys in the trees above, are

a frequent sight. In the midst of a banana grove we watched a Javanese ordering his cocks and hens to go to bed in a tree as it was sundown; a small gangway led up to their night quarters and the fowl were evidently quite accustomed to obeying instructions, for they fluttered obediently up the little ladder and found their favourite resting-places among the branches.

Bandoeng possesses excellent hotels, the best that we had seen since leaving Honolulu; and the local newspaper provided us with a two-column war news summary in English. There were air-raïd shelters and other signs of war-preparedness, and the Government buildings were well protected. British prestige stood high and British propaganda was efficient. Apart from Mr. Churchill's portrait, which was everywhere, posters and pamphlets in Dutch, produced by the British Ministry of Information, were widely circulated. We used to read the Singapore dailies, which reached us four or five days after publication. We talked with pride to our Dutch friends of the great Singapore Naval Base, a pride which they shared, as it formed the pivot of the Allied Defence Scheme in these Eastern waters. But we were slightly disturbed by a leading Dutchman saying: "No one believes in the Singapore Naval Base more than I do; but I wish there were some ships in it, though, of course, we realise that you British cannot spare many war vessels out here at present."

At Bandoeng is a great civilian aerodrome, the jumping-off place in peacetime for the K.N.L.M. 'planes which flew to Europe in four or five days. Since the collapse of Holland great progress had been made with the defences of the N.E.I. The inhabitants said that the Japanese would find a very warm welcome if they came; but apart from aircraft flying overhead we looked for much military activity in vain. A leading business man who constantly travelled about the islands, said to me one day—it was early in October, 1941: "The Japs have missed the 'bus; they ought to have attacked us two years ago, when the N.E.I. were quite undefended, but they know better than to come now." The Japanese, by the way, were still allowed to reside in Java, but were kept under observation.

Bandoeng carried on the even tenor of its existence, with a definite atmosphere of "business as usual" or "recreation as usual." The populace forgathered every evening in a café, which might have been in pre-war Holland; and in the verandah of our hotel, after sundown, we watched the elect drinking their beer and their Bols. One evening a party was being given in honour of a Dutch officer who had just received promotion, from major to lieutenant-colonel, and baskets and bouquets of flowers kept arriving. A section of the cocktail lounge was screened off with a façade of palms and crotons; extra waiters, bare-foot and alert, and officers with swords, in white uniforms with gold epaulettes, escorting their women-folk, all garbed in the latest confections. There was a constant clicking of heels, introductions, and hand shakings, and at the end of the hall was a pyramid of flowers. The tunics of the officers were much beribboned, presumably gained in local warfare, as the Dutch had done no fighting in Europe except in those few dramatic days last year. The enthusiastic toasts continued for two hours. If reaching the rank of lieutenant-colonel entails such festivities, we wondered what suitable form of tribute occurs in the case of promotion to a general! We looked down from our balcony next morning and saw a vast quantity of empty bottles being removed!

Dutch friends took us for several drives round the European residential districts, where real estate values were booming. Luxury houses were being constructed on all sides; a new park was being laid out with the latest type of swimming pool and an adjoining restaurant. New avenues with flowering trees and shrubs were pushing their way into the countryside. We saw the white mansion, probably the largest residence in Bandœng, belonging to a rich Chinese merchant, who had placed it at the disposal of Princess Juliana for her expected visit just before the war.

Buitenzorg, our last stopping-place on the way to Batavia, is famous for its Botanical Gardens, the finest in the East, and always associated with the name of Sir Stamford Raffles, Governor of the Colony during the British occupation during the Napoleonic Wars. There is a delightful old-world atmosphere about Buitenzorg; from the verandah of the hotel we looked into the Governor-General's Palace, with its large park where Japanese deer were browsing. Inside the Botanical Gardens was every variety of tree and shrub, and lily ponds with the wonderful *Victoria regia*, the leaves of which are five feet in diameter and lie on the water like a bright green tray. At the end of a grove of bamboos is an old-world pillared monument to Lady Raffles, erected by her sorrow-stricken husband. On the tomb of his Olivia Marianne are these words:

"Oh thou who ne'er my constant heart  
One moment hath forgot,  
Though fate severe hath bid us part  
Yet still forget me not."

This was the only visible sign of Raffles's connection with the island that we found, but the great work that he did in Java is his enduring monument.

In Batavia we felt very much linked up with Singapore and Malaya, for in the hotel reading-room was a complete file of the Singapore papers. The Hotel des Indes is an international rallying-point and for the first time since we had been in Java, we met Americans, as the normal tourist traffic was, of course, at a standstill elsewhere. Talking to our American fellow-guests, discussion of the war news stirred in us a deep Anglo-Saxon patriotism. Amongst them was a travelling representative in Ford tractors, who was apparently successful in persuading the Javanese to give up ox-ploughs for more modern methods of cultivation, besides another travelling salesman, who for the last twenty years had been selling automatic telephones from Java to Vladivostok.

The hotel lounge was a hub of life, for Batavia's Centrum is a modern town two miles away, with its native quarter, its sampans, its Chinese temples, and its seventeenth-century Portuguese church. Before dinner the Dutch community forgathered on the verandah in force—Dutch officers in uniform, with their portly *vrouen*, American business men, resident Dutch, and British traders in their white tropical clothes. The climate necessitates one or more clean suits every day. Laundry charges were incredibly low; a little Javanese woman, in a wine-coloured jacket and *sarong*, would appear after breakfast and take the washing, regardless of the quantity, returning with it in the evening perfectly laundered, and only charging a shilling!

Saturday was a *dies non* as far as the business firms were concerned, as military training for the local Militia was obligatory in the case of all the white employees. We saw a battalion of trainees of all ages, from 35 downwards, returning from their drill; many of them were very much out of condition. I have never seen

a crowd of men looking so "done up." They wore green linen uniforms and puttees, and all looked exactly as if they had been dipped in the canal.

Getting away from the Netherlands East Indies was no easier than getting into them, and we found lengthy formalities had to be complied with in order to change Dutch currency into rupees. Although we had booked our passages as far as Singapore, the manager of the K.P.M. told me that my wife would not be allowed to accompany me, and that anyhow, she would have to appear in person, even should permission be granted, as they were on the lookout for Fifth Columnists masquerading as wives! Fortunately I had a letter in my pocket from Sir Shenton Thomas, the Governor of the Straits Settlements, in which he welcomed us both by name to Singapore, so I had no further difficulties.

At Batavia I attended a meeting arranged by Mr. H. Giel, President of the Netherlands Trading Corporation. The purpose of the discussion was to make plans for a widespread appeal on behalf of the Overseas League Tobacco Fund, which his committee had kindly undertaken. We arranged details of the circularising campaign they hoped to carry out, and this certainly was an indication that no fears were entertained as to the likelihood of Japanese aggression in the near future.

The Port of Batavia is six miles from the city and there we embarked for Singapore. Our hearts were warmed when we saw a detachment of New Zealanders on board and we watched with interest the excellent work of a voluntary committee of Dutchwomen who were looking after passing Australian and New Zealand soldiers. There was a fine cornet player on board and he played topical tunes in which the New Zealanders, bound for Singapore, joined. They were a thick-set and sturdy lot, and a party of six of them stripped to the waist and did a Maori war dance on the quay in honour of their kind Dutch hostesses. Local hospitality had been so great that they were in the gayest of moods. As we glided from the quay the cornet soloist played "There'll Always be an England," which was fervently joined in by British and Dutch alike, while a party of four Japanese passengers listened and looked enigmatic. The Dutch National Anthem was played, and we stood to attention in honour of our Dutch Allies, and then came "God Save the King"—to us the most moving moment of the past four weeks. When we passed two Norwegian ships, our versatile musician played the Norwegian Anthem, and "Yankee Doodle" as we steamed slowly by an American vessel. We waved enthusiastically to the Dutch, Norwegian and American seafarers, and wished that Hitler could have looked down on this far-off corner of the world. We would have liked to read the minds of the four Japs, but they were apparently engrossed in playing Chinese chequers.

The dominating impression we carried away after a month in Java was of the fertility of the island, the density of its population, the efficiency of the Dutch rule, and the island's remoteness from the war. Whatever the future may have in store, I am convinced that sooner or later there will have to be a change in the present methods of colonial administration, as seems to be intended by the Dutch authorities, to judge from their recent announcements. It is impossible to believe that a system which permits 200,000 Europeans from 10,000 miles away to occupy the position of a superior race can endure permanently. How long it will be before the subject race will be in a position to make its demands on the Dutch Monarchy for some form of Government

analogous to Dominion status, it is impossible to say. That the day will come, as it has come throughout the British Empire, when trusteeship gradually gives way to self-government, I do not doubt. The recent authoritative statement issued by the Royal Government would seem to show that the authorities are fully alive to the situation.

The manner in which a small nation like Holland had established internal peace over a vast section of South-East Asia, 2,000 miles in length, is an impressive achievement in the story of European colonisation. The stable conditions of Indonesia have afforded many trade opportunities for the hard-working Chinese and Indians. Most of the great commercial enterprises are Dutch-owned, and all the shipping is in Dutch hands. Talks with Dutch residents conveyed the impression that the N.E.I. hoped to establish closer trading relations with Australia, New Zealand and its other neighbours, and although the danger of immediate Japanese aggression may have been underestimated, there was very real concern as to how a small country like Holland could give adequate protection to its vast colonial territories in a world in which aggression was becoming frequent.

The construction of the Singapore Base undoubtedly was a reassuring factor, the A.B.C.D. Conferences (Australia, Britain, China and Dutch East Indies) demonstrated the fact that the N.E.I. realised it could not exist without friendly neighbours, and there was always the comforting conviction that the United States would not tolerate Japanese aggression in the South Pacific.

## CHAPTER XII

### SINGAPORE—BASTION OF EMPIRE

"WE REACHED THE OUTWARD ISLANDS" (TO QUOTE FROM MY DIARY) "AT ABOUT 7 a.m. on 13th October, 1941. All the last part of the journey we had been within sight of land, Sumatra or one or other of the small Dutch Islands. One does not see Singapore until one almost gets up to it, because it is low-lying and extraordinarily well sheltered by these outer islands. It has a marvellously well-protected harbour, and Raffles certainly knew what he was about when he chose the site. We passengers were made to give up our cameras last night, though, as there are still some 3,000 Japs in the territory, I expect Tokyo has all the information it needs, card indexed! Our four Japanese fellow-passengers who embarked at Batavia tried to look innocent; we were quite sorry for them, because even if they were all Kagawas they would have been under suspicion. We thought it was rather kind of one of the New Zealand soldiers who chatted to them as we were approaching the harbour to put them at their ease.

"The Japs rather obviously sat away from the gunwale as if to show that they took no interest in the sight of oil tanks and the harbour defences! Several British patrol boats put in an appearance as we approached the dock. We were delighted to be back on British soil and were not sorry to leave the N.E.I. on account of the difficulty of getting war news and the absence of British newspapers. The harbour was full of shipping, but one does not see great evidence of naval activity as we did at Honolulu; perhaps that is because the Naval Base is twelve miles away on the north side of the island."

The first glimpse of Singapore was impressive—clean docks, fine Government buildings in the centre of the town, with the statue of Raffles to welcome one. The big commercial concerns are near the front; one crosses a bridge and gets into the Chinese quarter. At first view Singapore looked like a Chinese city, which in reality it is, for out of its population of 750,000, 700,000 are Chinese, only 20,000 Malays, 20,000 Indians, and a British element of no more than 8,000. We saw very few Malays, who wisely appear to prefer the countryside. The Chinese side-streets are picturesque, with gaily coloured washing hanging out to dry. The Chinese working women wear black or white trousers and jerkins, rather drab after Java. We noticed with regret that much corrugated iron is used, and wished Dutch architects had been consulted when modern Singapore was built.

After stifling days in Singapore it was delightful to return to the Sea View Hotel, six miles out, where we were staying, with its broad lawn right down to the water's edge, and its big round dining-room, open on all sides and built out over the sea. A stately Sikh acted as hall porter, the waiters were Chinese, and the office staff Indian. From the lawn we had a good view of the distant hills on the Dutch Islands, to the right, of Singapore roadstead and its shipping. The shark-proof bathing pool adjoining the lawn had been abolished owing to defence preparations, and there were barbed wire barriers all along the eastern shore.

The lawn at the Sea View was very popular after sundown, as there was usually a sea breeze; a band played four evenings a week at dinner-time, and the grass was dotted with small tables at which residents and their friends had cooling drinks and sought to forget the discomfort of life in the tropics. The place was popular with the military; the capacity of the old-timers for alcoholic refreshment was considerable, and it did occur to me at the time that the High Command should have seen to it that officers did not set a bad example. On several occasions I saw British officers disposing of seven or eight whiskies on end—surely not the best regimen for those to whom the defence of the Empire's main fortress in the Far East was entrusted.

We dined with Sir Shenton and Lady Thomas on the evening of our arrival, in the usual type of Government House, with enormous halls, sitting rooms and corridors, all open to the air. Picturesquely dressed Indians in white, with scarlet sashes, and low-crowned wide-brimmed scarlet-striped hats, as worn in the days of the East India Company, moved noiselessly and efficiently about their task. There was a complete lack of formality. Several departmental heads had been asked to meet us, including the Colonial Secretary and the Head of the Prison Department, very creditable representatives of the British Colonial Service. I wished that some of the journalists both in Great Britain and in the United States, who rejoice in decrying all that pertains to British Colonial Administration, could have been present; they would have found men who had given their entire lives to the administration of native territories under difficult climatic conditions and took a deep and intelligent interest in all matters concerning the Empire.

We discussed up-to-date prison reform, and the great part the British Empire has still to play in the world in its role as trustee for native races politically undeveloped, and for gradually helping colonial territories along the road towards self-government. There were naturally divergent views as to the exact form of Government best suited to these different territories in Asia. The officials



were fully aware that there must be no blind attempt to foist Western political systems on the peoples of Asia and Africa. What was needed were more men of the type of Lord Lugard and Lord Hailey to show the way. The Governor was rightly proud of the fine record of the British Colonial Empire, and we discussed the urgent need for the establishment of an efficient organisation at home, in the Empire, and in the United States, for disseminating correct and up-to-date information concerning our colonial administration, its triumphs and its failures.

After dinner the guests were shown some admirable coloured films, taken in various parts of the Federated Malay States, depicting the visits of the Governor and his wife, to the courts of Malayan rulers. During the evening, as far as I recollect, the subject of Japan was never mentioned, but I realised that the picture of effete colonial administrators with no interest in their job is an entirely fictitious one. There was probably too much clinging to precedent and a reluctance to try new methods, but on the whole the British rule ensured peace, justice, and equal opportunities for trade, and could stand comparison with the administration of any Colonial Power.

The Governor inquired if there were any special activities in the Colony which I wished to study, and kindly arranged for me to see some of the Service canteens, clubs and welfare work, both at the Naval Base and at Singapore. I studied the activities of ten different organisations doing welfare work for the various Services, and found what an excellent group they made. I visited the Union Jack Club, the Mission to Seamen, the Club for Australian Troops, and the recently constructed hostel for the Indian Forces. I met the members of committees of different denominational bodies, including Toc H and the Presbyterian Group, and was taken by Major-General Keith Simmons, Commanding at Fort Canning, to see various activities of the Services Welfare Organisation. We also visited the site of the new Services Club, where Chinese women, wearing cone-shaped straw hats, were carrying away earth in baskets slung on poles across their shoulders, and it was hoped soon to have the Centre in running order. Visiting various Service institutions, I was reminded, except for the tropical environment, of similar investigations at Aldershot or Portsmouth in days of peace—there was certainly no atmosphere of a hostile foe round the corner, waiting to pounce. In war-time London there was a greater sense of being in the front line. Certainly if military activities had been as efficiently directed and co-ordinated as was the welfare work, events might have turned out very differently. As a layman I never gained any impression that we were at a pivotal point in our global strategy and that Singapore might shortly be attacked. Some officers in British regiments told me that they expected to be transferred to the Middle East at any moment, as the next “big show” would probably be in North Africa!

The British Trade Commissioner was concerned with the problem that after the war would confront Great Britain, of recapturing the markets she had lost for lack of shipping; goods took six months to get to Singapore from Great Britain. He explained to me that much of his present job consisted in telling people where they could get their supplies, as British factories were increasingly concentrating on war work! Both the United States and Australia were developing their export trade in Malaya, and an important post-war problem

for Great Britain will certainly be how to recapture some of her lost markets owing to concentration on armament production.

The tragic practice of Mui Tsai, the selling of Chinese girls for servitude in houses of ill-fame, was brought to our notice on several occasions as it was much in the public eye, and local opinion was bringing pressure to bear on the Government. Miss Nicoll Jones, a recognised authority on the subject, who had spent eleven years in Burma fighting the white slave traffic, was then in Singapore, and was endeavouring to get the bureaucratic machine to move more rapidly. While we were there an announcement appeared in the Press to the effect that the Bill to stop the traffic in boys was shortly to go through its final stages in the Legislative Council. The traffic originally started with the Japanese invasion of the Fukien Province in China. I learnt at first hand from Miss Jones, the Bishop of Singapore, and other social workers, of the horrifying activities of Singapore's underworld.

The problem of Mui Tsai is a difficult one. In China, baby girls are unwanted; even in "civilised Singapore" baby girls could be bought for 12s. 6d. Chinese mothers with large families were only too ready to get rid of small daughters. I was told that probably they would gladly pay 12s. 6d. to have a girl baby taken off their hands!

The war and famine in China had, of course, stimulated the sale of little girls, and the trade flourished owing to the prevalent conditions of overcrowding, bad housing, and poverty. Agents of the traffic visited the famished parents in China and told the mothers they would give them a year's wages in advance for a little girl of 12 and find her a good job in Singapore or Hongkong. They offered fifty or a hundred dollars for the purchase of the girl, which meant comparative wealth to the parents, and the offer was usually accepted. The "bill of sale" for one of their children was drawn up in proper commercial terminology. The following is copied from the *Hong Kong Daily Telegraph*: "I, the maker of this deed, for the sale of my daughter being in need of funds have decided to sell my young daughter, Ah-Hoh, aged seven, who was born on the 13th day of the eighth moon, to Mrs. Lee, who has agreed to have her, and who has subsequently paid me the purchase price of H-K90, including remuneration of the middleman. In case of any calamity each party shall acquiesce to the decree of Heaven. . . . Signed . . . . . Dated on a lucky day in the twelfth moon."

On the journey from the interior to the coast of China, the little captive was instructed carefully as to what she was to say to the Customs authorities, and she was threatened with dire consequences to her family, unless she said that the woman who was escorting her was her mother or her aunt. The officials were therefore faced with the difficult problem of ascertaining whether the relationship was a genuine one. I also discussed with the Bishop the possibility of starting a non-profit-making Housing Trust in Singapore, on the lines of the excellent Housing Trusts at home, as the problem of cheaper accommodation in the native quarters was the kernel of the matter. The Bishop said that in Hongkong there was a Central Council, with sub-committees engaged on studying every aspect of the vice problem, and it was hoped to work on similar lines in Singapore.

The prevalence of tuberculosis among the rickshaw men and their love for opium were other matters discussed; but in view of the notorious conservatism of the East the path of the reformer was not easy. Social workers said that the

rickshaw men themselves would probably resist any attempt to transfer them to another walk of life, although conditions were especially favourable that autumn, as there was an acute local labour shortage, and the problem of importing even Javanese coolies was under serious discussion. We could not understand why in place of human-drawn rickshaws, pony carriages or tricycle rickshaws, as used by the Dutch in the N.E.I., could not be introduced into Singapore.

St. Andrew's Cathedral, situated in the middle of a large green lawn, looked from a distance like any cathedral in England. The congregation included many Chinese, and the officiating priest, an Englishman, was assisted by Chinese and Indian clergy. After some of the sombre details we had been hearing it was reassuring to find a virile Christianity, with no barriers of class or colour. I have tried to give a picture of Singapore as we found it in October, 1941, preoccupied with peace-time problems.

The Chinese community in Singapore was very proud of its British citizenship, and most generous in its contributions to War Funds. One of its leading members, Ng Sen Choy, invited us to spend the evening at his country home, and this is my diary note of the visit: "We passed many soldiers and motor lorries, and during the last part of the nine-mile drive we went along a side-road flanked by rubber plantations. Our host lives in a palatial villa, built on the edge of a cliff running down to the sea, on the eastern side of the island. Huge pots with flowering shrubs flanked the steps. We walked through a great hall on to the verandah, and looked out on to a sea golden in the setting sun and framed by an arch leading to the garden; and after sundown watched the sea and sky mingle into a dark purple canopy. Candles with glass shades were placed on the tables on the marble terraces. We drank toasts to China in her war against Japan, in drinks brought from a sumptuous cocktail bar. We looked across the twinkling lights of the fishing huts out in the void of night. We could dimly discern the mysterious shapes of the barbed wire entanglements at the foot of the cliff on the sea-shore below us. Our host's son was most solicitous in his attentions; every few minutes he handed round elaborate *hors d'œuvres* and cocktails, saying each time he passed my wife, 'Cheerio, Lady!'

"As we were sitting talking on the terrace our hostess joined us, and asked: 'Have you seen my little sucking pigs?' We assumed this must be some Chinese custom, when a sucking pig would be roasted on a spit in honour of the guests. With some trepidation we followed her, but to our surprise we were taken upstairs. In large and beautifully appointed nurseries were two small male grandchildren, aged three months, being rocked to sleep by their *ayahs*. An attractive young woman, wearing a flowered brocade jerkin and trousers, was the mother of one of the infants.

"We spent a very pleasant evening with our friends, talked about local problems and the great future ahead of Malaya, and we came away convinced that in no section of the British Empire were more loyal subjects of the Crown; they had implicit belief in British institutions."

If anyone that evening had described what was to take place a few weeks later, he would most certainly have been regarded as a raving lunatic. Europe might rock, but the British Empire would reign supreme in South-East Asia.

On Trafalgar Day we lunched at the Naval Base with Rear-Admiral E. A. Spooner and his wife, better known in the world of music as "Megan Foster," famed for her rendering of folk songs. Navy House at the Base had been ready

about a year, but had not been occupied by the Admiral's predecessor, so Mrs. Spooner was immersed in problems of furnishing under war conditions. To resume the diary entry:

"Getting into the grounds of the Naval Base is no easy matter; the Indian sentry on duty insisted on even Mrs. Spooner showing her pass! I am glad to see that the supervision is so thorough. The house has a splendid site on a hill, and over a vista of trees we looked down on the Straits of Johore—the channel that divides Singapore Island from the Federated Malay States. Twenty years ago the Admiral wrote a memorandum on the urgent need of a base at Singapore, which the largest ships afloat could use; and he is rightly proud of the fact that he is now in charge of this vital link in the Empire's defences. Apart from our host and hostess the only people at lunch were the A.D.C., who was at Tobruk, and the Naval Welfare Officer, by name Fitz-Gibbon, a much-travelled Irishman, who has roamed the world from Penang to Peru."

We spent a sweltering afternoon in going round the Base in charge of the Welfare Officer. For the second time during the day, we were held up at the gates, also by an Indian sentry, although we were under the escort of the Welfare Officer. The latter said peremptorily to the sentry: "Let pass; Admiral's orders." But I was glad to see that the sentry was imperturbable, and our guide had to go into the control box and get telephonic permission from Headquarters before we were permitted to proceed. The Naval Officer escorting us said with a smile that he was quite certain that the Japanese knew all there was to be known about the place.

Seventeen years ago, I was reminded, the first sod was turned and a tropical jungle, rubber plantations, and banana groves had been transformed into a modern dockyard. Wherever we went there were great scenes of activity, the human ants were hard at work. New buildings were being rushed up alongside vacant plots, which reminded me of a "prairie boom" town. Great physical obstacles had to be overcome, hills removed, a river deflected, a bridge pulled down, and swamp-land drained. Chinese coolies were driving piles into the ground and Chinese women were removing baskets full of earth. "The whole undertaking is amazingly impressive, and the Empire has every right to be proud of the Naval Base. The dockyard is one of the three largest in the world, and the biggest ships afloat can come here to be overhauled. There are fine barracks, especially built for tropical conditions, with separate buildings for the Navy and the Army, for officers, non-commissioned officers, and men. The coolies and their wives have a district to themselves."

"We were taken round" (my diary again) "to see the fine recreation rooms of the various units; outside the mess rooms were plants in pots and flowering shrubs. The ground was still bare, but the officer in charge said that they hoped before long to plant trees. There was a small nursery, in charge of a Chinese gardener, where we were shown wonderful orchids, suspended from the roof. Near the officers' quarters was the Naval Base pet, a honey-bear, that kept walking restlessly to and fro behind the bars, swaying his neck in rhythm. Adjoining was an aviary with local birds. The men were making full use of the lovely blue-tiled swimming pool, freshly chlorinated every four hours. The policemen at the Base were Sikhs, who towered over the small Malay seamen in the Auxiliary Naval Force. There were endless repair shops, storage rooms, hush-hush buildings, and foundries where the men's bodies, stripped to the waist,

glistened in the glow of the furnaces. Very few European overseers were visible, for most of the work was performed by Chinese and Indians. Every now and then we passed British blue-jackets, in their tropical kit of shorts, imperturbable and quite at home. They have fine canteens, a cinema of their own, and a football ground. Darts are a favourite pastime; the Indian troops excel at hockey. We left just before sunset to drive back to Singapore, our minds loaded with impressions, all feeling proud of the Royal Navy, and convinced that the Japs will have their work cut out when they come down to these parts."

On one of our last days at Singapore we lunched with Mr. Duff-Cooper and Lady Diana. They had a large delightful house on the heights, a few miles outside Singapore, and his offices were in a neighbouring building. Lady Diana wore an enormous straw hat, almost as large as those worn by the Chinese women, and looked amazingly young. After lunch I walked up and down the lawn with our host, discussing current events. Lord Beaverbrook was reported in the morning paper to have stated that he expected an early invasion of Great Britain. Mr. Duff-Cooper did not agree, and thought that Hitler had his hands more than full for the next few months in view of his Russian commitments—a point of view with which I entirely agreed. As far as I recollect, we never even discussed the Japanese menace.

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It has been a curious experience reading through the journal I kept during our few weeks' stay at Singapore in October, 1941, and making the above extracts. I had not looked at it for two years. The staggering disasters of Pearl Harbour, the sinking of H.M.S. *Prince of Wales* and H.M.S. *Repulse*, and the capture of Singapore itself, had dimmed the recollection of impressions gained at the time.

I vaguely remembered the scathing criticism of a visiting American journalist as to the "business as usual" atmosphere in the Colony. I recalled the deep impression made on us by our visit to the Naval Base; I also recalled with pride the elaborate provision made for the welfare of the men of our Forces, which I had studied with some care. I expected to find many entries recording discussions as to the likelihood of Japanese aggression, a subject which I had discussed in the United States and in the Antipodes.

When I re-read my journal, to my surprise I found only two or three references to Japan! As it was posted to England, however, I probably left out remarks likely to attract the Censor's blue pencil. The general atmosphere of the Singapore we visited was one of quiet confidence evidently shared by local inhabitants, because the two Dutch mail steamers, coming from Australia shortly before Pearl Harbour, were crowded with residents in Malaya returning to the colony after their absence on leave. At a meeting of Britons and Chinese, who were members of the Overseas League, there was an almost complacent atmosphere, voiced in such typical expressions as, "I wish the Japs would come and put an end to all this waiting" and "They want a good knock and they'll get it." The Japanese had certainly played their cards very well, for somehow or other they had managed to convince foreign residents that they would never be prepared to take on Great Britain and America; and these views I heard on a number of occasions from so-called experts.

The closing of the Burma Road for three months by Great Britain and the

obvious desire of the United States Government to arrive at an understanding with Japan, strengthened the belief that there was no urgent danger. On several occasions military friends referred to the inadequacy of the Japanese Air Force and the curious fact that a nation possessing such excellent soldiers and sailors, seemed to have no air sense. The pusillanimous policy of the Vichy Government in the Far East caused some qualms, but Japan, which had absorbed the vital areas of China, and was fully occupied with the "peaceful" penetration of French Indo-China and Siam, was unlikely to embark on fresh enterprises in the immediate future. Even if Japan permitted her war party to obtain control, surely even the Japanese would think twice before incurring the wrath of America.

There seemed to be no limit to the strength of American Isolationism, but it was unthinkable that the United States could stand aside if Japan attacked the Netherlands East Indies. Singapore was the buttress of the Anglo-Saxon system of life in South-East Asia, and there were many who hoped that before long the American Pacific Fleet would be making use of the unique facilities of the Naval Base. America might have started late in the expansion of her army, but the American Navy was a force that even the Japanese jingos could not ignore. It is therefore of a confident and unworried Singapore that my journal speaks. As elsewhere in the English-speaking world, business as usual, or rather "better than usual," was the order of the day.

The American writer, Mrs. Ernest Hemingway, had written an article on Singapore which had just appeared in *Collier's Weekly*, and had caused a flutter in the local doves. The following extract gives a picture of Singapore as she saw it, which was reproduced in the local Press a few days after our arrival, and which struck us as much to the point: "Singapore is like a movie about itself. It has everything: the deadly heat, rickshaws, Rolls-Royces, the native Kampongs, Chinatown, low dance halls, the country club for white gentry, beautiful houses, Indian officers with beards and bright turbans, Australian troops in rough-rider hats, English officers like English officers impersonating English officers, Chinese taxi-dancers, elegant milky-skinned ladies, planes zooming overhead, Malayan royalty, orchids for five cents a bunch, tropical trees, pahits, gin slings, gossip, intrigue, parties and a possible war. All that is really needed is Miss Marlene Dietrich in the role of a water-front siren, vamping the Army, Navy and Air Force."

Mary Heathcott, who contributed an entertaining feature every day to the *Singapore Free Press*, made the following comment from the local British point of view in mid-October: "Mrs. Hemingway gives, it is true, rather a one-sided picture of Singapore, but she hasn't written anything which has not been said over a hundred times in general conversation. She takes some nasty cracks at English snobbery; well, maybe it is time somebody took some nasty cracks at English snobbery. . . . All these remarks and various others are calculated to annoy. . . . The subjects they touch on have been the basis of countless arguments over Singapore dinner tables, but evidently it all looks worse in print. Rather let us put our heads in the sand in the good old British way, and pretend that no one ever argues about income tax, that there is no unnecessary red tape in Singapore, no snobbery, that everyone—repeat everyone—is going all out in a tremendous war effort, that one-half of the population doesn't live in extremest poverty, while the other half doesn't care and lives higher than it need, that everything is hunky dory. It would have been nice if Mrs. Hemingway had

gone away and written about magnificent Singapore and its keen-eyed eager citizens forgoing their parties and their strenghahs saving their money for the war effort, but it wouldn't have been true."

A humorous writer could, no doubt, have made equally scathing remarks about Honolulu and Manila, Batavia or Bandoeng—in fact, about any colonial settlement in Asia prior to Pearl Harbour. It is always easy to be wise after the event, and now, as we look back, the shortcomings of Singapore are manifest; but our World Empire had been built up at a time when international relations and wars between nations followed certain well-defined lines. There were rules which were observed by both sides. It is hardly fair to blame the Colonial officials, who were carrying on in the traditions of their fathers and grandfathers. Admittedly the British colonial system was not devised to meet the emergencies of Totalitarian War and national treachery on the Pearl Harbour scale. The worst that can be said about the Anglo-Saxon Powers is that they apparently expected a so-called civilised nation to declare war in the ordinary manner. Doubtless the military authorities in Malaya were caught napping; they entirely underestimated the possible success of new methods of warfare, employed by a very ingenious foe, just as the French Army grossly underestimated the striking power of Hitler's highly trained hordes, and placed reliance on the Maginot Line. The ruthless aggressor who recognises no rules and is prepared to stoop to any act of treachery naturally has the advantage.

The Japanese technique was something entirely new in colonial warfare, just as new as poison gas or the tank when first employed in the last war. There certainly were many sins of omission on the part of the defenders of Malaya; there had been no Divisional Manœuvres nor actual rehearsals of an all-out defensive campaign under modern conditions. I think it is true to say that only one brigade of the Regular British troops in Malaya had received intensive training in jungle warfare, and they proved that they were able to face the Japanese. Nothing is more demoralising than inadequate air-power. I have repeatedly been told by those who fought in Malaya and in the Netherlands East Indies, that another hundred fighter 'planes would have made the whole difference. One day the full story of the fall of Singapore will doubtless be told; the layman can only await that event and describe the scene as he saw it.

We sailed from Singapore for Calcutta on a British-India steamer; the great majority of our fellow-passengers were British and Indian troops. A few minutes before sailing I asked the steward when we were due to leave. He replied: "I cannot tell you." Such was the security discipline! We left in a drizzle, but it was very interesting seeing all our preparedness, and it was nice passing shipping of our Norwegian, Greek and Dutch Allies. We were told that a floating mine had been picked up outside the harbour, just before we sailed. Our next stopping-place was to be Penang, 400 miles off, or one-fifth of the way to Calcutta, and then Rangoon, another 800 miles on.

## CHAPTER XIII

### TO CALCUTTA VIA RANGOON

A SEAT AT THE CAPTAIN'S TABLE IS NOT ALWAYS AN UNMIXED BLESSING, BUT ON the voyage from Singapore to Calcutta we enjoyed every moment. This was because of the interesting talks we had with two different types of men—a very efficient skipper, with a kind heart and much knowledge of the world, and an Irish-Australian Father in a Religious Order, with an Irish sense of humour and the remarkable atmosphere he shed around him of his vocation.

There were just the four of us, and we approached world problems on quite unorthodox lines through the eyes of a shrewd seafarer who had spent his life in untrammelled spaces of the ocean, and had given much thought to the seeming insanity of world politics, and a spiritual pilot, who had also been a wanderer all his life, but in the great spaces of the world unseen.

The skipper was very much of a realist and he gave a distinctly sombre picture of official inertia and of the alarming prospects before the British Empire in Malaya and in Burma, countries he knew intimately. He was one of the few persons we met whose forecasts of coming events have tallied with the actuality. We certainly obtained from him an alarming picture of what war with Japan would mean, and of the much too happy-go-lucky attitude of certain Colonial administrators and British military officers. Sometimes after meals my wife and I used to compare notes and I would say: "Well, the Captain was gloomy to-night; surely things can't be quite so bad as he makes out"—but there was an uncomfortable question mark left in our minds.

From the Irish-Australian Father we learnt other lessons; he furnished an example of utter consecration to great spiritual ends, and of a sane and orderly life that put first things first, and transmuted the little humdrum things of day-to-day existence into an integrated whole. In a world in which material values seemed to be sweeping everything before them, it was valuable to get things in their right perspective. He knew that we belonged to another branch of the Christian Church, but treated us as fellow-pilgrims in an over-ruling brotherhood. Every morning we used to attend the Mass celebrated by our little friend at 6.30 in one of the saloons; the congregation consisted of a captain in the British Army and of a dozen Goanese stewards. These had evidently been well instructed at the seminary at Goa, for, accompanied by a violinist among their number, they chanted the liturgical melodies of the Mass with very real fervour.

The discomforts of the voyage were great owing to the stifling heat, the black-out, the crowded state of our vessel and inevitable war-time restrictions. The tedium of the voyage was relieved by the never-ending interest of studying our fellow human beings. On the lower deck there were magnificent and stalwart Sikhs, drying their lengthy locks in the sunshine; later, we watched them, turbaned and majestic, in their white shirts, squatting round a glowing fire as they prepared their evening meal. There were Chinese and Malays, Hindus, Tamils and racial odds and ends from various parts of the British Empire.

Penang, our only stopping-place on the way to Rangoon, is a delightful little town. Prince of Wales Island is a few miles from the mainland and has a wonderful harbour; from the landing stage one looks across to the coconut plantations



and chains of mountains on the mainland. Curiously enough, the site of the city was chosen by Francis Light, the father of the creator of Adelaide; the founding of Empire cities evidently ran in the family! Up to the 'sixties Penang was ruled by the East India Company and people used to come down there from Calcutta when in need of a change. It can vie with Hongkong as one of the most attractive towns in Eastern Asia. There was an old-world atmosphere with a sense of leisure about its broad and well-laid-out streets, as well as an air of stability and prosperity. Many of the large houses belonged to the wealthy Chinese community.

A few miles away from Penang is the Chinese Snake Temple of Sungei Kluang, an extraordinary shrine. A temple stood at the top of some steps and inscrutable Chinese hovered around. Huge Chinese jars stood against the wall, into which incense tapers were inserted; statues of Buddhas and mysterious gods rested in alcoves. In an inner sanctum were portraits of prominent Chinese and, surprisingly, two large pictures of King George the Fifth and Queen Mary. On the walls were yellow and green mottled snakes hanging from the edges of picture frames, creeping out of cupboards, coiled round the branches of plants in tubs; we stroked them and found that, despite the wording of the tourist pamphlet which described the snakes as slimy, their bodies were warm and dry. The room was full of snakes, snakes to right of us and snakes to left of us, snakes above us and snakes below us; in this astonishing mixture of a temple and a curiosity shop the place belonged to them, and they wandered wherever the fancy took them. A gigantic yellow ball like a balloon was suspended from the ceiling, a commonplace kitchen clock ticked loudly on the wall; the temple was heavy with the smell of incense, for the snakes are incense-lovers. A benign old Chinese woman in black was telling her beads. In front of the altar another Chinese woman was praying to the snakes, accompanying her devotions with the shaking of a loud rattle. On the other side of the shrine stood an elderly gentleman who looked like Father Christmas. In large baskets, easily accessible to the snakes, were supplies of raw eggs, their favourite diet. During the night the snakes come down from their various habitations at meal time. In the adjoining courtyard were two boa-constrictors in a cage, into which the faithful threw silver and copper coins—surely, from the snakes' standpoint, unsatisfactory offerings! At night they were let out to forage for themselves—they were said to be addicted to a diet of young chickens.

The Botanical Gardens of Penang have a wonderful setting at the foot of a range of mountains; the hillside above is covered with jungle, and swarms of monkeys came rushing down to us from various directions and took from our hands the bananas with which we had come provided. There were orchid houses and rushing water with a little yellow frog seated on a leaf. Apart from the gardeners we had the place to ourselves. After this strange world in which we had spent our morning, we lunched at the roomy Eastern and Oriental Hotel, with its big frontage on the sea coast. There were flowering trees on the lawn, old-fashioned cannon pointing seaward, and golden-sailed junks gliding along on the glassy water. There was an intensely British atmosphere in the reading-room; there elderly gentlemen were immersed in *The Times*—we might have been at Cheltenham or Cannes; on beyond, officers belonging to the various Services, were drinking iced whiskies and sodas and pink gins.

In the cool of the evening we returned to our steamer and watched the ship's

cranes load vast quantities of tin, which looked like nuggets of gold in the setting sun. Here is a page of my diary, written at the time :

"We have had two days in Penang as there was so much cargo to take on board, not only vast quantities of tin but copra and betelnut. Sir Shenton Thomas told us on no account to miss the Crag Hotel; he was right, for it has one of the most wonderful sites of any hotel in the world. We drove four and a half miles through coconut plantations to the terminus of the little funicular railway. In twenty-five minutes one gets to the top of the mountain, about 2,000 feet high. As we puff-puffed up the side we got a leisurely close-up of a tropic jungle and plenty of time to recognise the orchids and wild flowers. From the station at the top we were taken in wicker-work cycle rickshaws, propelled by inscrutable Orientals to the hotel, which is situated on the very pinnacle of the hill. Certainly from the verandah and garden one gets a wonderful view of the little island of Penang, and the mainland of Malaya, five miles across the channel. Far out to sea was a British cruiser, looking very white. On the hillside adjoining the hotel are clusters of African tulip trees, a mass of scarlet blossom—in their way almost as lovely as the Australian coral tree."

Our last port of call was Rangoon, twenty-one miles up the Hlaing River, whose muddy brown waters, nearly a mile wide, were turned by the sunshine into yellow ochre. The low-lying countryside was brilliant green, and every now and then the golden peak of a pagoda glistened dazzlingly in the morning sun. On the river we saw every kind of craft, gondola-like small boats, propelled by boatmen standing up, with two oars which were worked by hands crossed, Chinese junks, rafts of teak wood from far-up-country; we also saw every variety of sailing ship and a long line of grey and grim steamers in their war-time paint, American vessels predominating because Rangoon was the port of entry for the Burma Road—the Chinese life-line. On approaching the port, we saw from afar the golden-roofed Shwe Dagon Pagoda. The day of our arrival was a Buddhist holiday and the banks and shops were closed. We drove straight to the Strand Hotel, close to the wharf, with its marble lounge full of perspiring Britons—naval, military and civilian. The waiting was done by imperturbable Indians, in white linen coats and trousers, black fezzes and black sashes; many of them were bearded, and moved with great dignity; it all seemed incongruous when cocksure young Europeans shouted out "Boy" when they wanted another drink.

"Rangoon was in holiday mood" (my diary reports) "and a surprisingly large number of Buddhist monks mingled with the picturesque crowd. There were monks—*Pongyi*—everywhere, wearing sandals, clad in brilliant orange with bare and closely shaven heads; they all carried purple umbrellas; their right shoulders were uncovered and their robes deftly slung, one fold hanging down at the front, and one fold at the back. A leading part in the campaign of Burma for the Burmese, under Japanese tutelage, was being played by the monks in the towns. They had much influence; every young Burman has to become a monk for some months, and it is owing to this that the subversive elements have got control of the youth of the country. Up-country the *pongys* are still said to be men of high character and to have great influence; but in Rangoon and Mandalay a common method resorted to by criminals is to adopt the garb of a monk and to seek sanctuary in the Kyaung, or holy place. The attractive little Burmese women wore transparent white muslin jackets, brightly coloured skirts draped

round them, and they also carried parasols. They were care-free and cheerful and seemed to have as much liberty as our women at home.

"The whole place was looking incredibly green after the Monsoon rains, and we circled round the town to see the Shwe Dagon Pagoda from every angle. There were quantities of ramshackle rickshaws, drawn by gaunt coolies, and amusing little wooden, yellow and varnished, shut-up waggonettes, called box-gharris, like doorless broughams, surrounded by wooden shutters with slats, so that the sun's rays cannot penetrate. On the roof are supplies of recently cut grass for the ponies, which gives a touch of colour. Rangoon is a city of parks and open spaces. We visited an old Christian cemetery which told the usual sad tale of early pioneer days when death took an abnormal toll of young wives and children; almost every tombstone had a pathetic inscription.

"The sacred fish-tank at Wingaba was drawing large crowds; round a big pond, covered with green slime, are situated little wooden summer houses built over the water. For a few annas one is given a basket with bread and popcorn, to be thrown on the water's surface, and then suddenly the most loathsome type of fish, with long quivering whiskers, darts up and seizes the morsels. Every now and then a sort of cod, rather like the fish in *Alice in Wonderland*, joins in. As it was a Buddhist holiday, the devout were paying their tribute to Brother Fish."

Just as in Singapore, we found galvanised iron everywhere and longed for the importation of a few American or Dutch tropical town-planners. After the war, when we have time for other matters, the British Colonial authorities should give special attention to our tropical architecture, or rather the lack of it.

The subject of Burmese politics was the favourite topic of conversation. U Saw, the Premier, was said to be a strong man, with a fair measure of common sense, but too much of a politician; he had gone to Great Britain to advocate independence, and curious rumours reached us as to seditious talk that was floating round, and we were told that the Japanese were fomenting trouble and were speaking as "one Eastern nation to another." I was sorry to find that a former Burmese friend, whom I had helped in London in the early days of Burma's struggle for Dominion status, U Ba Pe, was in prison. Dominion status twenty years ago seemed an entirely laudable ambition on the part of Burma, and I was glad to have been able to introduce the original Burmese Delegation to friends in Parliament and in the Press. I had not been in touch with Burmese problems for many years, and if the politically-minded were getting restive, it was not surprising. As in many other parts of the world, the official machine rotates too slowly, and reforms granted at the right time would have saved much future trouble. Certainly this is true of Burma.

The Burmese were much concerned over the continuous infiltration of Chinese and Indians into their country; big business was, as a rule, in the hands of foreigners, because, according to my informants, the Burmese "don't like work"—probably a far too sweeping assertion. I was told it was proposed to introduce legislation to provide an immigration ratio for Indians. Some friends said the most significant event that was taking place in South-East Asia was the gradual infiltration of the Chinese in all parts of South-East Asia, including Burma, and that "the Japanese might propose but the Chinese would ultimately dispose." Certainly during our wanderings we found hard-working Chinese everywhere.

We were particularly interested in observing great mountains of merchandise and thousands of crated American motor cars, awaiting dispatch to China via the Burma Road. There seemed to be a definite stoppage somewhere up-country, and we wondered how many months it would be before all this valuable war material, occupying every spare inch of the quays, would ever find its way to the Forces of the Generalissimo. When we mentioned our doubts to a British friend at Rangoon, he admitted that the delays were inordinate. Not so long ago the Governor had himself noticed the accumulations of merchandise destined for China, at one of the docks, and had taken the matter up; according to our informant, all that had happened was that the cases were moved to a less conspicuous dock, where as far as he was aware they still lay! We also heard unpleasant stories of graft, of important war material, supplied by America, never reaching its destination, as Chinese profiteers disposed of it to their advantage. What was really needed was the appointment of an expert at handling cargo with plenary powers, to be put in charge of all supplies destined for China—it was all very depressing.

“As we watched the trans-shipping of goods, mysterious smells were wafted to us from the docks, the Captain says they are either the Burmese national delicacy, *ngapi*, fish which is buried in the earth until it is alive with maggots, and is much appreciated as a condiment; or the *dorian*, a fruit which smells like bad drains, but if you can summon up courage to eat it, and hold your nose, has a good flavour and is much esteemed. . . . There is a plague of insects, the saloon tables are literally black with insects, small and large; I have been more or less devoured by mosquitoes and sand flies. Rangoon is a very bad place for insects, according to the Captain; there is one type of beetle, called the ‘stink bug,’ which gets into your hair, and when crushed emits the most horrible smell; then there is the ‘lick-spider,’ which comes upon you unexpectedly and leaves a trail on you wherever it has walked, this trail burns into you like acid, and if not treated in the correct way leaves a permanent scar. H. was shown such a scar on the arm of one of our friends to-day. There is also a ‘green-fly’ which gets everywhere, into your hair and ears.

“For an hour or two before sailing we witnessed the whole picturesque pageantry of the East, as we took on some 500 deck passengers. There was every type of Indian, soldiers belonging to a Punjabi Regiment, some stocky little Gurkhas, and an amazing cross-section of Indian womanhood in saris, looking from afar like birds of Paradise. The Muslim women still wear thick veils, exactly as they did in Turkey forty-two years ago. We looked down upon hundreds of the deck passengers coming on board, by far the most vivid bit of colouring we have seen on our journeys. We were glad to find that the women, for the most part, were not expected to carry heavy burdens. There were incredible quantities of household goods, which ranged from silver and brass utensils to bedding, and a wooden crate with some mysterious animal in it, carried on board by coolies. We shuddered to think where all the 500 would find room to sleep, because when we walked through the third-class quarters yesterday, there already did not seem a spare inch. Indians of all kinds and varieties, sitting in groups, munching peanuts, eating mysterious dishes off green leaves, singing in droning voices, lying in abandoned positions, washing themselves, spitting over the side of the boat, and trying to persuade reluctant babies to go to sleep.”

At the time we wondered why this large exodus to India was taking place; since then we have often questioned whether these passengers had had some advance information as to Japanese intentions. This was no normal migration but the moving of whole families, including the old and infirm, some of whom had to be carried on board on stretchers.

And so to Calcutta.

## PART TWO

### INCREDIBLE INDIA

#### CHAPTER I

#### FIRST IMPACT

THE EIGHT-HOUR JOURNEY UP THE RIVER HOOGHLY FROM THE SEA IS THE RIGHT way to approach India. Two and a half years before, when we arrived at Bombay, as do most passengers from Europe, we found ourselves in a great modern port with a European environment. Coming to Calcutta we had eight peaceful hours steaming up the mile-wide muddy brown river; it was the right prelude to the Indian scene. Low-lying country stretched on either side, with thatched villages, palm trees and paddy fields; kites, the national scavengers, soared above us.

The first impression was that the human being was used as a galley-slave, and that individual life was of little value. We passed Eastern craft of every description, including many boats propelled by twelve men standing two abreast, six long oars on each side. They stood still with their weight on the right foot, took a step forward, pulled with the oar, walking backward a step with the left foot, they looked like a fresco on an Egyptian tomb. It was thus that Pharaoh must have had himself propelled on the Nile, over 3,000 years ago. The unchangeable East in a changeable world!

We had heard depressing accounts of the slums of Calcutta, which alas, proved to be true; but the first impression was favourable. Behind the landing-stage were big expanses of green park, the famous Maidan, flanked by stately buildings. Our first task on arrival was to engage a bearer, though as a matter of fact, we were left no choice. A slim Indian Christian called Hasani, with excellent testimonials, straightway decided that he would take us under his wing; he said he would like to be our bearer, and eventually remained with us for six months. But, first of all, he insisted on escorting us to Cook's and stood within hearing distance while I discussed with the manager his qualifications for the job! From that moment our life was no longer our own; he walked in and out of our bedroom at all hours of the day and night, addressed me as "Sir Honour," and in response to any orders I gave him, replied, "Very well, please." He was a convert to Methodism, but owing to the bar of language, we were unable to indulge in theological discussions. He was scrupulously honest.

On the morning after our arrival, Hasani suggested a visit to Kali's temple; he urged us to go early so as to see everything, especially as "every day they sacrifice a he-goat." When my wife looked horrified, he smiled indulgently. I inquired how the poor he-goat met his end, he replied with an expressive sweep of his arm, "They just give him one chop." Under these circumstances we decided to omit Kali's Temple from our programme. The thought of animal

sacrifice is to us Westerners repellent, but in order to free the mind from prejudice, one ought to remember that animal sacrifice is one of the oldest religious customs, and that it plays a very large part in the Old Testament. From the outset, therefore, we attuned our minds to the thought that in Hinduism we were dealing with one of the world's oldest and most conservative religions.

Close to the hotel is the oldest Anglican Church, St. John's, the former cathedral. In the grounds is a mausoleum to Charnock, the Lancashire-born founder of Calcutta. The British flag was hoisted in 1690. We passed rows of beggars squatting on the pavement beside Government House, displaying their diseased limbs to the passer-by.

In one respect Calcutta was entirely different from anything else we had ever seen—there were cows everywhere; in fact, there seemed to be as many cows as human beings. On the wide spaces of the Maidan, in the neighbourhood of the cathedral, herds of cattle with humps were grazing. Bulls, cows and calves, secure in their exalted position, wandered unconcernedly on the footpaths, in the main thoroughfares, and in the by-ways, and in the narrow lanes at the back of the big commercial houses. On coming out from the bank, after cashing a letter of credit, I had to step warily in order to avoid bumping into a sacred bull. The cattle ignored the motor traffic when investigating the contents of the local dustbin, they paid no attention to the passing 'buses; presumably they knew that the drivers would get into trouble if they knocked them down. Mr. Gandhi says that he "yields to no one" in his veneration of the Hindu cow. While not going as far as that, I have a very special feeling for Hindu cattle myself; they symbolise toiling India to me, they are so patient and imperturbable. The oxen play an essential part in the life of India, they are to be seen on every road, in every village, in every field—pulling heavy loads, turning well-wheels and drawing the plough.

Within twenty-four hours of our arrival we got a first-hand view of swarming humanity eking out a miserable existence, in an environment of incredible squalor. The first good impressions were soon dispelled. We saw old men, young men, Sadhus, wild-looking dark-skinned men from the hills, Bhairagis with unkempt hair wearing loincloths, their bodies smeared with ashes. Tired humanity in extraordinary postures lay about the pavement, which was stained in every direction by betelnut spittle. Families were preparing their evening meals on the roadside; men, women, children and dogs were scratching themselves; men were being shaved by deft-handed barbers; underfed coolies were pulling great burdens; emaciated dogs on the lookout for a stray morsel, were hovering near a butcher's shop; while everywhere one went, in every street and on every pavement, there was the eternal cow.

Never except in China, Tsarist Russia, or in the Turkey of Abdul Hamid, have I seen so many beggars. In one small area we saw three lepers, with splotchy scars and eaten-away limbs. We felt that somehow or other, after 250 years of British rule, better and more hygienic conditions should prevail; but perhaps we were reckoning without the inertia of the East. We talked to a medical friend, and he explained that for twenty years a fight had been going on between the Government and the Corporation. Under existing conditions, he told us, if a man is walking about with virulent small-pox—a sight that he himself had frequently encountered, there was no law that could compel him to register, as he would probably claim that he resided in an up-country village!

From another friend we heard of a corpse being left to lie the whole morning outside her front door. Death is a matter of not much moment in Calcutta, and official regulations had to be carried out by the tireless Babus before the proper authorities could be got to take action.

We drove with friends to the Ballygunge Country Club, there to watch helmeted golfers and their womenkind playing in shorts! In the park near Belvedere, racehorses were being exercised by stable hands, and we met many Indian bearers taking the dogs of their European masters out for their morning and afternoon walk—not a very suitable occupation in the midst of the war for civilisation. The friend with whom we were having tea said he thought a bomb on Calcutta would be very salutary.

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My first talk on Indian political problems was with Arthur Moore, then editor of the *Statesman*, a fellow-Ulsterman, who had just returned by air from Great Britain and America. He believed in the granting of Dominion status to India forthwith, and was in favour of the immediate elimination of India Office control from London, and the vesting of all powers in the Viceroy as the King's representative. He thought that Japan (this was in November, 1941) must move soon for the sake of prestige, if for nothing else; certainly that was the impression made on us during our visit to Rangoon the previous week. According to its own papers, Calcutta was badly prepared for air raids. He was much struck by the love of luxury in the United States, and the disinclination of the people to get involved in the war. He thought India could be saved for the British Commonwealth if imagination were shown. The chief interest of this conversation was that it took place just one month before Pearl Harbour.

Our first railroad journey in India was from Calcutta to Delhi, and this page or two from my diary may give an idea of the panoramic scene: "We try not to make comparisons with railway travel in America, which spoils one for any other part of the world. Except on such trains as the Frontier Mail and the Bombay-Calcutta Express there is little air-conditioning, and the dust keeps pouring in. Indian dust has to be seen to be believed, and there are always unpleasant thoughts as to its component atoms. Everyone in India seems to be on the move, and the crowds are unbelievable. . . . We went through endless swamps, where the pampas grass looked lovely swaying in the evening light, paddy fields, cattle everywhere and white ibis. Endless villages of mud houses, with cakes of cattle dung plastered on the walls, and drying for use as fuel. Outside the villages were ponds with water hyacinth, blue water lilies and slime. . . ."

"I woke up next morning to find we were passing through Cawnpore. It is so extraordinary seeing names with which one has been familiar since schooldays, and I seemed to be turning over the pages of Kipling again. We are now in the United Provinces, crossing plains of brown earth, with fields of last summer's maize, and a succession of mud villages surrounded by mud walls in the shade of trees. As far as human habitations are concerned, nothing could be more primitive than these Indian villages, and the dwellers therein must be living just as they did 4,000 years ago. We passed small mosques and Hindu shrines, and many water wheels, with two oxen being driven up an incline, a wheel with



buckets filled with water, and the contents emptied into irrigation canals, after which the oxen are driven back again, and the process is repeated. There were large blue cranes and storks, and wild peacocks, as also several trees full of monkeys, and as we neared Delhi we saw carts drawn by supercilious camels."

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The Viceroy and Lady Linlithgow had asked us to stay with them at the outset of our tour. On leaving Delhi Station, we sped along the tree-lined highways on the five-mile drive to New Delhi, getting a passing glimpse of the old Moghul Red Fort, from which fluttered the Union Jack. New Delhi is on a much more magnificent scale than anything I had visualised, and is a worthy capital for an "Indian Empire," though I wondered who would be occupying it in a hundred years' time. The only thing that seemed at all comparable to us was the scale of building at Washington.

During the last part of the drive we caught glimpses of the white-pillared one-storied bungalows of the officials, among trees and gardens. We passed the "palaces" of the Rulers of Nepal, of Hyderabad and other Indian States. Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker have certainly done a fine job. At the end of the main avenue leading to the Viceroy's House and the North and South Blocks of the Secretariat, is a large statue of George the Fifth and the view of the buildings as one approaches is extremely impressive. The domed Viceroy's House with its marble steps and colonnade is flanked on each side by the Government buildings, constructed of the attractive pink and cream coloured sandstone so extensively used by the Moghul Emperors. We drove through the iron gates, where stood mounted sentries in red tunics, their lances decked with pennants. As we approached the building two motionless and incredibly picturesque figures stood at the top of the glistening marble stairs; at the entrance a host of tall and turbaned men came salaaming towards us, on the front of their tunics is an emblem to show their term of office on the Viceroy's staff.

In a rapidly changing and democratic world, I used often to wonder how far the pomp and ceremony of the representative of the King-Emperor would fit into the scheme of things when India receives Dominion status. I called to mind the dazzling brilliance of the uniforms at Dublin Castle fifty years ago, the military pageantry and splendour that I had seen in Russia as late as 1905, and in the old days of Constantinople, the weekly procession of Sultan Abdul Hamid to the Selamlık, escorted by his ministers and high officials, who ran alongside his open victoria all the way. This was at the end of the century, and all of those vivid scenes to-day only are memories of regimes that are dead and gone.

"We assembled in the drawing-room before dinner, punctually at 8.30. Preceded by two A.D.C.s, the Viceroy and Lady Linlithgow walked in, when the presentations took place. They are both very tall and very natural in their manner. They led the way into the dining-room and the twelve of us in the party followed, the Viceregal band striking up. As we entered into the dining-room, rows of turbaned attendants in red tunics at each side of the table stood to attention, one behind each chair, with arms raised, the backs of their hands touching their foreheads, the fingers just meeting. It was one of the most picturesque meals I have ever attended. H. told me afterwards that she had found him, the Viceroy, 'totally unfrightening, so easy to speak to and that he

gave the feeling of being really interested! Lady Linlithgow is absorbed in the fight against tuberculosis which she has made her special concern during her stay in India and has done a wonderful job. She is a great expert on the whole problem of T.B. and has focused attention on this scourge which is responsible for the death of one in ten of the population. Enormous sums of money have been raised recently, and, owing to her, anti-tuberculosis clinics and committees have been established in many parts of the country."

There were several Indians at lunch the following day, including Sir Feroz Khan Noon, then Labour Minister on the Viceroy's Council, a prominent Muslim, and Mr. M. S. Aney, Member for Indians Overseas, a Hindu and a former Congressman. During the afternoon we were taken round the State apartments, just being prepared for the Reception to be given to the recently appointed American Commissioner. They are on the grand scale of St. Petersburg or Schönbrunn, and Buckingham Palace would look almost suburban in comparison. We climbed up to the dome in which pigeons nest, whence we got a wonderful view of a green world, with trees everywhere, and looked down on the formal Moghul garden.

On the evening before we left, the Viceroy arranged to have a talk with me, and here is my diary record: "Knowing how frightfully busy he is, I thought he would only be able to spare me ten minutes; as a matter of fact, our talk lasted an hour and a quarter, and he made himself late for dinner as he had some State papers to sign afterwards. I thought it was extraordinarily nice of him. We discussed the plans for my tour round India and he gave me a complete *résumé* of the present political situation, taking just as much trouble as if he were dealing with a really important matter of State. He is so extraordinarily natural that I felt entirely at my ease and was able to say everything on my mind. I am so glad that I have come to India as a free agent, and not in any sense as an emissary of the India Office; he thinks my detached position is very valuable in view of the sensitive state of various sections of Indian opinion. The strength of my position is that I am a non-party investigator, who was one of the earliest advocates of Dominion status, long before Round Table days, beholden to no one, with no axe to grind, and paying my own expenses. He gave me very valuable advice, and hints of pitfalls to avoid, and thought it an admirable idea to try and make personal contacts with all sections. The study of political conditions at the main centres will certainly take nearly four months if we are not to kill ourselves; and at the end of our tour, he and Her Ex. have asked us to come and stay with them again. I shall start off on my journey very much encouraged.

"He understands the particular contribution I feel I have to make at this moment is based on the fact that I have recently studied conditions very carefully in the United States, and am therefore able to discuss Indian problems bearing in mind the background of the whole English-speaking world. He knows that I hope to publish a book on my return to England, giving an up-to-date picture of a world at war. I was very much struck by his wisdom and deep understanding of the intricacies of the Indian situation, and his overwhelming desire to promote the welfare of this vast country."

During our first week in Delhi we lunched with the Commander-in-Chief and Lady Wavell; I had not seen him since the summer of 1896 at Summer Fields, the Preparatory School, near Oxford. He told me that recruiting for the Indian

Army was going on satisfactorily. After luncheon I discussed, with one of the guests, the amazing fight the Russians were putting up, and referred to the views I expressed in New Zealand, where we were when the Germans launched their attack on Soviet Russia, to the effect that Hitler would probably capture Leningrad and Moscow within six weeks of the outbreak of the war. My neighbour laughingly remarked that our host, the C.-in-C., with his knowledge of Russia, had estimated that the Germans would be in Leningrad within a month!

"Before starting on our tour round India we stayed at the Cecil Hotel in Old Delhi, which has since become a second home to us. Not since leaving England have we seen such crowds listening to the B.B.C. bulletins. Two weeks in Delhi were little enough in view of the number of contacts to be made. I soon realised that the task of getting a fair and unbiased view of the Indian scene was a Herculean one; if it had not been for the fact that at the time of the Round Table I had studied every facet of Indian opinion, I should have felt very much at sea. At the house of Sir Feroz Khan Noon, former High Commissioner in London, I learnt of his proposal for India to be divided into five huge Dominions, North-West India, which would have a Muslim majority, Bengal, which would be half Muslim and half Hindu, the United Provinces and Central India, and Bombay, both Hindu-controlled, and Madras which is of Dravidian origin."

A stay in Delhi was useful as prominent Indian politicians of all kinds make their way there, either to attend the sessions of the Legislative Assembly (India's House of Commons), the Council of State (Upper House) or the Chamber of Princes. At dinner at Sir Henry Craik's we met Sir Manekji Dadabhoy, a prominent Parsi, and his wife; he is the President of the Council of State, and therefore more or less corresponds with the Lord Chancellor in England. He is a warm supporter of the British *raj*, and they shook their heads when they heard we were going to stay with Mr. Gandhi in his Ashram.

The liberal point of view was furnished by Pundit Kunzru, a member of the Servants of India Society, a great idealist and an old friend. With Pundit Kunzru I met a group of militant Hindus, who looked at everything from a diametrically opposed standpoint to that taken by my Muslim friends the day before. When I mentioned to them the proposed establishment of two autonomous Muslim States, they said they would never agree to such a policy. Kunzru had been at the British Commonwealth Conference held at Sydney, N.S.W., three years before, and was much impressed by the freedom he found both in Australia and in New Zealand. I asked him at the end of our talk: "If Great Britain treats India as a free and equal partner after the war, are you prepared to remain within the British Commonwealth?" To which he gave an affirmative reply.

A few days later Mr. Shiva Rao, the Indian correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*, and closely in touch with Congress, gave a party, so that I could hear the Congress point of view. His wife is a Viennese, and in all our wanderings throughout India I found no more bitter critic of the British *raj*. I sat next to Mr. Asaf Ali, the Muslim Chief Whip of the Congress Party, who had emerged from his fourth term in prison a few days before. He told me that he had been put in prison because he advocated that India should take no part in supporting the war unless Great Britain promised her freedom at its conclusion.

After lunch six of the male guests present spoke with great bitterness against the Government of India. I asked Mr. Asaf Ali why Congress would not accept

Dominion status, as I was anxious to know his views, because he was the only prominent Muslim supporter of Congress that I had so far met. With some fire he replied: "Don't mention Dominion status to me, the very words are abhorrent to me and to my friends." I asked him what was his goal? He replied: "The free India of the future must be an associate of the British Commonwealth in the same sense that the United States is an associate." With one of Mr. Asaf Ali's remarks I found myself in sympathy; he asked me why was it that all the statues in New Delhi were of British Viceroys? I myself had thought that it would have been a friendly gesture if the administration had erected statues to some of the great Indians of the past, Hindu and Musulman, in the seat of the Central Government.

After two weeks of talks the following "solutions" had been placed before me:

*Militant Hinduism.*—Complete independence of a United India in which the Hindu majority would be in control, also subscribed to by a handful of Muslims who were members of Congress.

*Muslim League.*—Till the British Government recognised the duality of India there could be no settlement, for Muslim India would never accept permanent Hindu domination.

*Hindu Liberals.*—Granted that the unity of India were preserved, which would give the Hindus a permanent majority, they would be prepared to accept Dominion status within the British Commonwealth.

*A Muslim point of view.*—Sir Feroz Khan Noon's scheme of five huge Dominions.

On our last day in Delhi, 2nd December, my journal records a talk with the American journalist, Mr. William Fisher, of *Time* and *Life*, New York: "He has been doing a travelling job in the Far East for five years, during which he visited China, Japan, the Philippines, the Netherlands East Indies, and Singapore. He surprised us by his remarks concerning Japan; in addition to their fine Navy he says that the Japs have a very fine Air Force, and fears that the U.S.A. very much underestimates Japan's strength. He was very much impressed with the preparations at Singapore but thought that the defences of Burma were quite inadequate. He is convinced that Japan cannot defeat China." I quote the extract in view of the fact that it gave the opinions of an intelligent observer five days before Pearl Harbour. Just as we were leaving Delhi there was unpleasant news of the set-back in Libya, the comment in my diary at the time was: "I do hope they are not holding anything back; it looks to me as if the armament of the heavy German tanks is much stronger than we expected."

## CHAPTER II

### UNTOUCHED INDIA

OUR FIRST EXPERIENCE OF UNTOUCHED INDIA WAS IN THE STATE OF DHOLPUR IN Rajputana; we left Imperial Delhi, the seat of the British *raj*, and five hours later found ourselves in the Middle Ages. It is not often in life that one can jump back 500 years in five hours! Before setting out we had received a cordial letter from the Maharaj Rana of Dholpur, apologising for not being

able to offer us the comforts of civilisation and fearing that we might find it difficult to adapt ourselves to the "very jungly conditions of Dholpur." His Highness need certainly have made no apologies.

Half a mile from the railway station, on the outskirts of the little town of Dholpur is a pink sandstone building, constructed of the same kind of stone out of which the Moghul Fort in Delhi is built, which comes from Dholpur State. At the head of the flight of steps leading to the entrance hall stood the Maharaj Rana, who had come to meet his guests at the threshold after the charming manner of Indian hosts. He is a small man of slight stature, with a bearing of great dignity, as befits a ruler who can trace his direct ancestry for 2,300 years.

He wore an orange turban, a brown-striped close-fitting frock coat, closed to the neck like a uniform, with red stone buttons with diamonds in the centre, white jodhpurs, and black patent leather pumps. Besides visiting Dholpur State on two occasions, we frequently met the Maharaja when he came to Delhi on official duties, and a very real friendship resulted. The Maharaj Rana speaks perfect English with a complete command of British idiom, having learnt our language as a child from an English governess. We had been warned that in him we should find a very conservative ruler. In a world of changing values, which had been busy tearing down ancient dynasties, and trying to discard tradition, especially in December, 1941, one of the darkest moments of the war, there was something reassuring in finding a ruler convinced of the divine right of kings, but in no sense as a selfish doctrine, but as a guiding principle that "the ruler had a fundamental obligation to rule justly." He regards the position of a Maharaja as representing the Deity to his people and as that of a father to his children, just as he considers his every action in relation to the trusteeship with which he was invested "by the 'All-Loving Father'." Here we were afforded the opportunity of studying personal rule at its best, and certainly in India, it seems as if no system of government will ever be successful which does not admit of the closest personal touch between ruler and ruled.

During our visits to Dholpur we had many opportunities of seeing the system at work. Every morning the Maharaj Rana goes out unescorted, shortly after daybreak, in his two-seater, which he drives himself, and during the year he visits every village in his State, where every subject knows he has the right of direct access to the ruler. The Maharaj Rana purposely goes unescorted as he wants each of his subjects to know that at any time he can see him alone, uninfluenced by the advice of State officials. When we were driving with him we might suddenly see a man stepping out into the middle of the road, waving a petition in his hand. The Maharaj Rana would stop the car, exchange a few words with the suppliant, tell him that he would look into the matter, and we would proceed on our journey.

The object of this account of our visit to Dholpur is not necessarily to advocate the introduction of similar methods into every part of India, but certainly our experiences in Dholpur, at the outset of our Indian journeyings, left a very big question mark in our minds. Whatever the form of constitution that is ultimately adopted in Hindu India, in Muslim India, in Sikh India, the personal equation will always have to be borne in mind. Much of the unpopularity of the British *raj* in recent years is undoubtedly due to the fact that the rulers in New Delhi are regarded as something remote and out of touch with the life of the ordinary people. To see the British *raj* functioning at its best one should visit the Deputy-

Commissioner going his rounds in rural India, where he dispenses justice and where his word is law. The Maharaja of Dholpur, as was to be expected, is a strong upholder of the British monarchy and a loyal supporter of the King-Emperor. He is firmly convinced that Parliamentary democracy will never suit India, and that the only way to ensure a peaceful settlement would be for the King-Emperor to take direct command through his personal representative. So long as British rule implied a huge administrative machine, it would never appeal to the Indian people. It was not enough just to have the effigy of the King-Emperor on the rupee notes, on coins and postage stamps. The King-Emperor must make a direct appeal to the hearts and the imagination of his Indian subjects. I have listened on various occasions to the Maharaj Rana explaining these views to somewhat startled American correspondents.

In all our wanderings through India we never saw such devotion as was expressed by the people in the State of Dholpur when the Maharaj Rana passed by; this was a system they understood. They knew and revered him as their ruler and he knew them and their problems. The system worked. A code of justice was in force which provided for direct appeal to Caesar—a living, human, ever-present Caesar, whom the inhabitants saw moving among them most days of the year. To denizens of the Western world, brought up on theories of government of the people, by the people, for the people, it was all very strange. In the evenings, after days of sight-seeing and discussion, we hardly knew whether we had taken leave of our senses. We were in a world administered by a cultured and orthodox Hindu, speaking faultless English, who had shot pheasants at Windsor with King George the Fifth. He stood before us as the personification of personal rule; he dispensed justice in his own way; his word was law; he was animated by a burning faith, and the "All-Loving Father" was a reality to him. On the other hand, he had astrologers and soothsayers, whom he consulted on every occasion; on each day of the week he wore turbans and gems of the appropriate colour in accordance with prescribed rites. He believed, in common with many Hindus, that gems are influenced by the stars, and that they in turn influence mankind. There are probably many orthodox rulers in India who, before taking important decisions, first of all ascertain whether the astrologers declare the hour to be propitious. Horoscopes play a great part in the life of the peasant, and it is said that every child's horoscope is cast when it is born. While at Dholpur we felt as if we were in a dream and would suddenly wake up, but it was no dream.

He was a warm friend of the Duke of Windsor's, and felt his abdication deeply; as viewed from the East it was fantastic that a powerful King should give up his throne for the sake of a woman. When the Duke came as Prince of Wales to India, the Maharaj Rana had served on the royal staff. Many of our discussions took place after dinner in the brocaded drawing-room, where a portrait of Queen Victoria, given to his grandfather by the Queen Empress, looked down on us from the wall. Dholpur was said to have been one of the best shots in India, but some years ago he gave up shooting and to-day reserves a large area in his State as a game sanctuary. Every evening His Highness drives through his game reserve, which practically adjoins the Palace of Kesarbagh, where he lives—a great stretch of undulating country patterned with scrub and tree. He drove the car in which we were and with us was one of his A.D.C.s who provided an ample supply of *chapatis* (native cakes) and other delicacies for

the animals. At the first stopping-place we got out of the car, and in response to the Maharaj Rana's call, a herd of *sambhar*, very timid deer, whom he knew by name individually, came and ate out of his hand. We then drove into the jungle and when the car stopped it was surrounded by more *sambhar* who pushed their snouts through the open window of the car asking for food. Almost at the same time a family of wild pig trotted up, the little porkers actually placing their forelegs on the running board and waiting to be fed. The Maharaja has an extraordinary power with all the animals and birds; when he held his hand out of the window the lovely *treepie*, with long tail and attractive marking, flew down and took the offered morsel. This bird is known as the "tiger's toothpick," for after the tiger has had a good feast, he opens his mouth wide, and the *treepie* picks the remnants of the meal from the crevices of his teeth.

Deep in the jungle His Highness turned on the wireless and we listened to the 6 p.m. news bulletin. We saw black buck, an attractive antelope with white markings, and the blue-bull and wherever we went we were surrounded by a chorus of peacocks who were as common as sparrows are in England. We left the game reserve and arrived at the Winter Palace, where the Maharaja welcomes his guests in the cold weather; it is called Tal-Shai, an enormous rose-red building erected by the famous Moghul Emperor Shah Jehan, constructor of the Taj Mahal. It has a romantic setting on the edge of a large lake, a paradise for wild fowl, cranes, heron, geese and wild duck. Shah Jehan after having built the Palace only lived there a fortnight; he had many other dwellings, and one palace more or less can have been but of little moment.

Just before sundown our host took us in his private motor boat out on to a large lake in a very lonely part of the jungle in the middle of the game reserve, here in the summer evenings from on board the launch as many as seven or eight tigers have been seen at a time coming down to drink; on one occasion the Maharaja came upon a tiger swimming across the lake and followed in his wake fifteen yards behind. We felt in the very heart of India as we slowly explored inlet after inlet. There were wild peacocks everywhere, and on the trees were groups of storks, who winter here before flying to continental Europe in the summer, and snake birds looking like cormorants. Shortly before sundown the sky looked almost emerald, as flocks of green parrots flew into the setting sun. Around the lakes lay innumerable crocodiles. On the drive back in the glare of the headlight a hyena suddenly crossed the road and stood transfixed, staring at us.

On another occasion in the daytime, deep in the jungle, we watched the Maharaja calling his favourite animals by name, whereupon a pack of jackals and some blue foxes drew near to our car. We watched them standing up on their hind legs to catch the *chapatis*, made of flour, butter and sugar, which he flung to them. Snapping and snarling at each other, with their fur bristling, the jackals stood up on their hind legs, catching the thrown morsels, as dogs do at home. Once a jackal kept on whining in a peculiar way in spite of the fact that it had been amply fed, and remained gazing in a certain direction. A few seconds later the Maharaj Rana understood the reason for its peculiar behaviour, for there was a large panther in a tree, of whose presence the jackal was trying to warn him.

One day the Maharaj Rana took us to visit the little town of Bari, built of red sandstone and very old, with many remains of the Moghul period, a relic

of the old and untouched India. There was only just room for a car to pass down the main street, and devoted subjects ran ahead to push and pull goats and donkeys out of the way, while the populace stood still respectfully, their hands raised as if in prayer with a rapt expression on their faces, and shouted aloud "Sri Maharaj," which means more or less "Worship to you who hold all power in yourself."

During the whole of our stay in Dholpur we never saw a white face.

We appreciated the privilege, thus early in our stay in India, of having many of the subtleties of the Hindu philosophy and religion explained to us by so devout a believer. I told the Maharaja the fact that the Hindus believed in many gods was always puzzling to us and asked for his explanation. He said he had been asked the same question by Lord Halifax and had replied to him in the following manner: "The Deity presents Himself in many different forms, but behind each form there is always the same God; just as a man puts on different clothes and shows a different aspect of himself according to his environment. He is different as father, husband, administrator and friend, but he is still the same man." To Dholpur the transmigration of the soul explains all the riddles of the universe. I can't say that I agree with him, but when in India I constantly had to remind myself of this widespread belief in order to explain to the Westerner much that would otherwise be incomprehensible. To a Hindu, any suffering in this brief life-span is but the expiation of previous wrong-doing and therefore calls for no human interference—it is an inevitable step in the soul's upward progress. This doctrine enables the believer to disregard the woeful plight of the Untouchable, destined throughout life to perform the most degrading tasks, and to regard with equanimity the long-drawn-out suffering of a stricken animal by the wayside.

I asked the Maharaj Rana how would he explain the practice of Suttee, formally abolished 100 years ago, although it is sometimes practised still. This was his explanation: "From the Hindu standpoint the woman reaches out to the Almighty through her husband only, and when he dies, therefore, the world has no more meaning for her, as her sole desire is to follow him, so as to continue to serve her lord as she did on earth."

Some years prior to our visit, the Congress Party sent delegates to try and stir up agitation in the State of Dholpur, but while many of them were admirers of Gandhi, the people in the State said they were perfectly happy under their Ruler, and the Congress delegates had to return to the United Provinces without having made any headway.

Our second visit to Dholpur was in August, 1943, after the monsoon rains. The whole countryside was incredibly green, almost as green as the emerald parrots that were constantly flitting across the sky. When we drove through the jungle it was difficult to hear ourselves speaking, for it was the mating season of the birds, and wherever we went the peacocks kept up an incessant chorus of "ke-ow; ke-ow."

From what I saw in Dholpur State it certainly seemed as if a strong case can be made out for personal rule when the Head of a State is so enlightened as Dholpur's present ruler, but I wondered what safeguards there would be in the case of a ruler not so adequately equipped for the task?



On the occasion of our second visit the Maharaj Rana invited my wife to visit the Maharani and the Princess, his only child; this she took as a great compliment and she was very glad of the opportunity of penetrating the precincts of purdah. The following account of her visit was written by her at the time: "One of H.H.'s turbaned staff accompanied me to the outer flight of steps leading to the Palace, but no further. As I got out of the car a little, plump, elderly Englishwoman, the Princess's tutor, appeared at the head of the steps to welcome me. I had expected to be led into secluded apartments, but to my surprise the Maharani and the little Princess were in the large reception room immediately adjoining the entrance, with the double doors on to the verandah thrown open wide, and draughts blowing from all directions, as formal as the lounge of the Ritz. Though it was only eleven in the morning the Maharani and the 15-year-old Princess were magnificently dressed in beautiful flowered saris, and wore the most gorgeous jewels—jewels we should consider appropriate for a Court ball. The Maharani kept her sari across the lower part of her face most of the time, which made her remarks somewhat difficult to understand, especially as she does not speak English fluently. Her hands and arms were loaded with emeralds and diamonds. I had to speak very slowly and evenly, as I was not sure how much she understood. I knew that the Princess was her only child, and it is a great sorrow to her that she has no son, so when she asked me if I had any children and I replied an only daughter, I knew this would be a bond between us. She was very much interested when I spoke of my five little grandchildren. I told them about the dreadful time they had been through that first year in London, during the terrible air raids, and when I described their shelter and the nights they spent in it, she was most sympathetic and deeply interested. A little later on the Maharani asked me if I would like to see the famous family jewels, and the 'tutor' went off to give the necessary instructions. Presently the most astonishing bearer appeared, a tiny figure hardly five feet high, and almost as broad as he was long, dressed in white with a large white turban and carrying a covered tray which he brought to me. It was laden with the most amazing pearl necklaces I have ever seen; one necklace had only fourteen pearls and these were about the size of marbles, so large that they encircle His Highness's neck. They are only worn on occasions of the greatest pomp and importance, and with them he wears ropes and ropes of pearls of every length. When I had properly enlarged upon these wonders, the strange little bearer, who I am sure by his abnormal appearance is a eunuch, went off and fetched two more trays, laden with jewels of every kind and size—I never saw anything like them. The little Princess grew very interested in showing them to me and I then admired the jewels she herself was wearing, much to her gratification. One was a beautiful diamond and sapphire necklace, matched by rows of sapphire and diamond bracelets up both her arms; and on her pretty little forehead was fastened a large round plaque of more diamonds and sapphires. I told her I always wondered how these plaques were securely fixed, she was much amused and showed me how it was done, while her mother watched with an indulgent smile.

"The Princess is very sweet; tall, slim and very graceful, and despite her jewels and her magnificent attire, and, under it all, she is still a child and utterly natural. She speaks good English. She has evidently few companions of her own age, as she is kept in the strictest purdah; her mother said she had a few girl friends who sometimes come to see her, but she is not allowed to go

and see them in return. I had heard from the member of the staff who drove up with me that she had a collection of animals, so I asked her about them and she eagerly told me that among her pets is a bear, now full grown, an animal she has had since it was a small cub, so it 'knows' her and her father and, I gathered, no one else. The tutor has a lively fear of it, and was terrified last night when the bear gate-crashed through the wire netting of her bedroom window, having broken its chain. She, the tutor, took refuge behind a screen, thinking that her last hour had come, but fortunately after a few seconds the bear's keeper appeared in pursuit. The Princess was much amused at the whole episode. She also has monkeys, mongooses, and parrots of every description. The monkeys were brought round for me to see, but she was not even allowed on to the verandah, the tutor whispered to me: "The Princess is in strict purdah," so the monkeys had to come into the drawing-room. How do the women of India submit to so incredible a life? When we were talking about travelling in India, and I said the only way really to do so, was by 'plane, the Princess looked up with shining eyes, and said: 'Oh I would love to fly,' which made me realise how caged she must feel at times."

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"The Maharaj Rana listened daily to the German and Japanese broadcasts, the German broadcast being translated into English, and the Japanese into Hindustani. The Japanese broadcasts were very cleverly done, he told us. In August, 1943—at the time of our second visit—they were harping on the rice shortage in Bengal, and they offered to send 1,000 tons of rice, if the Indians could get 'the hard-hearted Government of India to agree.' They kept on saying, as part of their programme, that they 'didn't want a single Indian to die' and that their ships were waiting, ready and loaded, for the British to give them safe conduct. Eight days before the appointment of Lord Wavell as Viceroy, the Japanese announcer gave out the news."

### CHAPTER III

#### FIRST VISIT TO GANDHI'S ASHRAM

A STAY AT SEVAGRAM ASHRAM WAS ONE OF THE THINGS TO WHICH I HAD MOST looked forward in India, for Gandhiji was a friend dating from Round Table days, and I was greatly drawn to him as the result of our first meeting. At that time I was editing the *Spectator* and had been one of the earliest advocates of Indian freedom, having written an article before the Round Table Conference, entitled "The United States of India." The *Spectator's* espousal of the cause of Indian freedom had won me many friends among the Indian delegates, and when I invited Gandhiji to spend an evening with me at our Chelsea house he accepted. I shall never forget those three hours alone with him. I felt a strong bond of sympathy between us, for we were both disciples of Ruskin. In his case, *Unto This Last* was one of the books that had the greatest effect on his whole life; in my case it was *Fors Clavigera*.

When we took leave of each other late that evening I was presumptuous enough to think that if fate had left the solution of the Indian problem to us two, there and then, the veils of misunderstanding between our countries would have vanished. My confidence was, however, rudely shaken at some of the subsequent group discussions and other meetings when I heard him speak in public. I realised that there were many facets to the Indian problem, and that I was no match for the Mahatma! For some years I kept up a desultory correspondence with him, and C. F. Andrews, who often used to come to the *Spectator* office, was a link between us. I therefore arrived in India well disposed towards Congress, and especially towards Gandhiji, though somewhat concerned about the recent activities of the party.

My Irish upbringing had, I felt, been useful in enabling me to appreciate "the other fellow's point of view." Since the beginning of the century I had known most of the "rebels," or "local autonomists" in the Commonwealth—in Ireland, Arthur Griffith (the founder of Sinn Féin), de Valera, and Cosgrave; in Canada, Monsieur Bourassa and other leading politicians in Quebec Province; in South Africa, General Botha and General Hertzog and the back-veldt Boers; and in Australia, the founders of the Commonwealth, including Alfred Deakin and Sir Edmund Barton, yielding to none in their "Australianism" but firm believers in the British Empire; and in Egypt, too, I had known many Nationalist leaders.

We travelled straight from the hospitable roof of the Maharaj Rana of Dholpur to Wardha. It was a twenty-hour journey from Agra in a very crowded train, and in the next compartment to us was a British General who at a quarter to seven in the morning was walking up and down the platform, shaved as if he had just come out of the Naval and Military! We longed for the hermetically sealed windows of American trains; no one can exaggerate the discomforts of railway travel in India in the dry season, on account of the dust.

"The catering arrangements on an important through train like this from Delhi to Madras (as I noted in my diary) are really disgraceful; one or two overworked attendants carry meals on a tray, perhaps the whole length of the train, and one just takes one's food when one can get it. We had to wait for our breakfast till eleven. Owing to war-time conditions the trains were running late, and we arrived at Wardha at 8 p.m. instead of 6 p.m., so that all we could get for dinner was an apple, a banana and a few biscuits. There were endless delays in connection with our baggage, although we only wanted to take out a couple of bags, H.'s typewriter and my attaché case, to the Guest House. At one moment we thought we should never disentangle ourselves, Hasani was surrounded by a howling mob of ten coolies, each of whom had seized one package, and neither he nor they listened to what the other said!

"To our consternation we found that no car had been sent for us, and subsequently we learnt the reason. My telegram had been telephoned to the Ashram, six miles from Wardha—incorrectly. There was no vehicle of any kind to take us to the Congress Guest House. H. and I squatted upon our baggage on the pavement outside the station, surrounded by objects that looked like shrouded corpses. A goat trod its way warily among the recumbent figures. An Indian booking-clerk, noting our plight, invited us into his office and treated us to hot liquid, which tasted more like cocoa than tea and was very sweet.

When we wanted to pay he refused, and we were much touched by this friendly act.

"At 10.0 p.m. after a wait of two hours an emissary from the Congress Guest House returned with our bearer, we then learnt that they had twice sent to meet us earlier in the day. We drove off in three tongas<sup>1</sup> in the light of the full moon. The Guest House was a two-storied white building with a colonnade and interior courtyard, on which the door of our room opened. The room was whitewashed and had a stone floor; there were three 'charpoy' bedsteads, a table and two chairs, not even a wash basin. On the walls were three pegs, on which we hung our clothes. After a twenty-four-hour journey we were travel-stained and dusty and longed for a bath, so that our hearts sank when our guide conducted us to the washing shed and we saw the sanitary arrangements. In a sort of scullery were five commodes side by side, the hostel was full of Congressmen and H. was the only woman. On the opposite side of the passage was a room in the corner of which was a cold-water tap which dripped into a bucket, and this was all there was in the way of washing arrangements.

"Fortunately we had our own bedding and Hasani made up our camp beds while we were trying to wash ourselves under the tap. Next morning we did some writing and at 11 o'clock we walked through the blazing sun to an adjoining house and in a small colonnaded backyard found two little tables and chairs set for us, the only Europeans, while the eight Congressmen present, in their white homespun clothes, sat on the ground with their lunch in front of them. We had exactly the same fare, served on an enormous pewter platter. Simultaneously placed before us were raw tomatoes, hot curry, vegetables, cheese-like curds, and maple sugar, while from a glass goblet we drank very hot peppery soup and ate thin flat biscuits of unleavened flour.

"The meal ended with a bowl of sour milk and a banana; only one Congressman smoked. We ate our repast with our teaspoons, an accessory which the Congressmen dispensed with; they ate with their hands, dipping their *chapatis* into their soup. After the repast they went to a running tap in the yard, washed their hands, and rinsed their mouths in the manner of our ancestors. There was vibrating heat in the courtyard and we disliked leaving the grateful shade even for a second, but the friendly little sparrows seemed quite acclimatised.

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"At midday we were escorted by several members of Congress, including one ex-President, in an ancient Ford car, flying the Congress flag of yellow, white and green, to Gandhi's Ashram, half a mile from the village of Sevagram. Hitherto there had been no direct road and visitors had to go bumping over the track in a bullock cart. Most of the teams of draught oxen that we passed were very frightened and evidently unaccustomed to motor traffic. One pair of bullocks, drawing a waggon, was terrified and bolted into the ditch, waggon and all, and got entangled in a barbed wire fence, the passengers being thrown out. We thought the Congressmen took the matter very lightly, they just laughed and seemed entirely unconcerned at the passengers, who were picking themselves up, or the bullocks, involved in the barbed wire; we wanted to wait till we saw them extricated; this did not seem to us a very good introduction

<sup>1</sup> A small vehicle somewhat like a dog-cart and drawn by a pony.

to the Village of Service, where I had expected to find Ruskinian ideas as to the treatment of animals, and in view of the Mahatma's known support of cow worship, his followers were certainly giving a very poor example of concern for the welfare of the animal kingdom.

"Gandhiji's Ashram is really a village in itself, it consists of a settlement of one-storied huts enclosed by a fence. The houses are neat little grey cement buildings with tiled roofs in a compound of parched earth, and here and there a flowering tree. On the cement verandahs there were *kusks* (screens of rushes to keep out the heat). A charming Indian woman, in white sari with wine-coloured border, came up and shook hands with us; she is the Mahatma's secretary, and appears to have taken the place of Miss Slade. Her name is Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, she is a Christian, and her brother is a High Court judge.

"She asked us to come in straightway to see Gandhiji for a few minutes' informal talk, as he wanted to have a glimpse of us before his daily rest. We are to have our real talk with him at 4 o'clock. This gives us three hours to bring our writing up to date. Gandhiji lives in a small three-roomed cottage; he sits on a thin white mattress on the ground, with orderly piles of his various papers and documents around him. When we entered his room he gave us a most cordial welcome. I felt we had taken up things where we left them ten years before, and I was delighted to think that all the recent political developments had not affected our friendship. He seems, if anything, younger than when I last saw him, and looks very well, although apparently he suffers from high blood pressure; so he is persuaded to have a sleep every day after lunch. He laughingly said: 'If I don't get my daily sleep I shall die before my time, and I don't want to do that.' He is now in his 74th year and is given massage treatment every morning; he no longer lives solely on dates and goat's milk, but has a very sensible diet of salads, vegetables, cream cheese and curds.

"At 4 o'clock a leading member of the Congress party summoned us to the Mahatma's presence. If our first meeting had been friendly and informal, on this occasion it was formal in the extreme, like interviewing the head of a State, surrounded by his councillors, and I had very much to mind my P's and Q's. H. and I were ushered into his room and being given two small straw stools, we felt to a certain extent like prisoners in the dock! Immediately in front of us sat Gandhiji<sup>1</sup> on his mattress; he wore glasses but not his dental plate, which occasionally added to the difficulty of understanding his remarks. He was in the usual ample homespun loincloth, and at the beginning of the interview had a white Kashmir shawl round his shoulders. When the conversation became heated half-way through our talk, he removed his shawl and sat before us naked to the waist and began to spin.

"His body is surprisingly well covered; the collarbone does not show and there are no hollows at the neck; in fact, his torso is that of a man of about 30, which shows that his vegetarian diet and occasional starves do not disagree with him. Despite the high blood pressure which necessitates his taking a good deal of care of himself, he gives the impression of being physically very fit. He said that he has to take great care of his eyes on account of the number of documents he has to read, and every day he sprinkles them with cold water at intervals. Then when he goes for his three-quarters of an hour's walk in the evening, one of his followers leads him like a blind man, as he keeps his eyes shut; he says it

<sup>1</sup> The "ji" is a term of respect and in addressing him one adds this honorific suffix.

is a wonderful rest and he looks forward to it all day. I asked him whether he went along blindfolded, but he said no, he found it quite easy to keep his eyes closed; on one occasion he kept his eyes shut for three days. He has given up this practice, as his followers said they could bear his lips being sealed on Monday, his weekly day of silence, but not his eyes being shut, too, as that made them feel so entirely cut off.

"On his left was seated on a low cushion, his secretary, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, who took copious notes during our talk, which lasted an hour and a half, and looked entirely non-committal. I also took ample notes which I checked afterwards with H. To my right a dozen Congressmen in a row, dressed in white homespun, squatted on the floor along the wall. This was a little disconcerting as I never expected an audience; for instance, when I talked to Jinnah at Delhi we were just two men discussing a problem in which we were mutually interested. In my interview with Gandhi I felt I was addressing not only Gandhi but the leading members of the Congress Party. Despite their silence I sensed their waves of sympathy with every utterance of their leader, which had a certain psychological effect upon me; it was a case of fourteen against two, but afterwards H. said that I need not have worried. On the other hand, Gandhi is so extraordinarily natural, and made me feel so completely how he looks upon me as a friend, that I was able to speak quite frankly. I still think as I did ten years ago, that he is not the great spiritual force he might have been; he is too much of the politician, and there is something unyielding about his outlook. He said in the course of our talk: 'I do not shut my mind to anything,' but he shuts his mind to many things and is full of prejudices. When he talks he appears rather to be playing to the gallery; once or twice I nearly let fly because it seemed to me that he was not being fair to Great Britain, but I am glad to say that I kept complete mastery of myself since an altercation would have achieved nothing. Indeed, we often find it difficult in India to hear this continuous criticism of things British and so rarely a just or generous word.

"I started off by referring to my talk with Jinnah last week, and his remark that the British and Germans have more in common than the Hindus and Muslims. Gandhi flatly denies Jinnah's summing-up and said: 'The Muslim is as much an Indian as I am and of the same blood.' In short, he denies that there is any fundamental cleavage between them. He added: 'When Jinnah speaks, he speaks as a disappointed man.' This seemed a surprising remark considering the rapid progress the Muslim League has made of late. He thinks that the British greatly over estimate the danger of civil war between Hindu and Muslim, if they withdraw, and said there might be fighting for a fortnight, but at the end of this time he would arrange things! I said: 'Surely you are assuming a good deal, Gandhiji.' He said: 'I am assuming nothing. I know it.' He thinks Muslim India's fear of subservience to the Hindu is quite imaginary, though very real to people like Jinnah, who express their fear of it. He declares that it is absurd to think that a Muslim population of 90,000,000 need have any anxiety as to their treatment, the word minority does not apply to them."

I cannot remember exactly in what connection Gandhiji made the following remark. We had been discussing in lighter vein the whole question of dictatorship and I said to him: "You know, Gandhiji, there are some people who call you a dictator!" Like lightning came the reply: "Ah yes, a dictator, but unarmed." I then tried to lead the conversation to the question of the British

Commonwealth and the possibility of a free and equal India becoming a partner therein, in the same sense that Canada is a partner. He readily admitted the freedom that Canada and Australia possess, and was willing to acknowledge that Dominion status was a reality as far as the white sister-nations are concerned; but he switched off when I tried to get him to say that he would be prepared to accept Dominion status for India. He seemed to think that at the end of the war there would be no such thing as the British Commonwealth, and in the event of a British victory, probably a commonwealth of all nations would be established, including Germany, Italy, Russia, China, Japan, the United States and ourselves.

He appeared to assume that the brotherhood of man was round the corner. Several times he repeated: "When Britain is wholly victorious, Britain as she is to-day will have entirely disappeared, and the world situation will be completely different; Russia will be no longer Bolshevik, and there will be no more Fascism and Nazism." When I referred to the sentiments expressed in the Atlantic Charter, he held up his hands in despair, and said: "I do not understand the Atlantic Charter." I suggested that he would like to see it at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean; he smiled and said: "Yes, let it remain there!"

I explained to him how opinion in Great Britain at the present time holds the British Commonwealth's chief glory to be that it enables nations of any race, colour or creed, to become partner States within its orbit. He readily admitted there were individuals at home holding this belief, but he did not think their influence was strong; the only voice he recognises is that of the Government of India, and he notes that Mr. Amery says India is unfit for democracy. I think he genuinely doubts the sincerity of Great Britain in its desire to make India a full and complete partner on a basis of absolute equality. He said he personally knew some of these idealists in Great Britain, but thinks they only represent a small minority. He made me feel that he did believe in the sincerity of British intentions, but that I, and those who think like me, are as voices crying in the wilderness against the crafty individuals who control British policy in India.

"I think he is quite genuine in his belief that we had worked out something rather fine in the Statute of Westminster for the white sister-nations, but is entirely sceptical as to our intentions towards the coloured races. That is why he kept referring to the treatment of the African people by the Union of South Africa, and to the fact that he had himself lived in South Africa for twenty years. I pointed out that we had of our own accord withdrawn from Iraq, and given it independence. To my surprise he seemed to think we proposed to take control of that part of the world after the war. When I referred to what we had done in regaining Abyssinia's independence, he passed on to another subject. Several times he told us how he had said early in the war: 'I do not want to embarrass Great Britain,' and added: 'Please remember that India has refrained from embarrassing Great Britain, and also remember that, if we had wished it, it would have been possible to ignite a spark that would have swept right over India.' But now he says: 'I do not wish disaster to British arms,' which certainly is a less detached point of view."

Then I said to him: "Cannot you, under any circumstances, give active support to our war effort?" He replied: "I cannot give active support without denying my lifetime's work for peace." He remains as much devoted to the doctrine of non-violence as ever. He bitterly criticised the setting up of Com-

munal Electorates at the Round Table, this he refers to as "the most disgraceful chapter in British history."

"It was at this stage of the proceedings that he took up his spinning wheel, which lay on the ground beside him, and stripped himself to the waist. Earlier in the discussions, when we were talking of difficult subjects, we noticed his toes wriggling; once he started spinning they remained quiet. On one or two occasions he returned to his favourite theme, that the British Empire permitted the spoliation of the African and Asiatic races. He appears to believe that a World Commonwealth will emerge after the war, and said: 'I shall consider it an honour to belong to that community of nations. The British Commonwealth, as we know it, no longer exists, for it has practically become a British-American Commonwealth.' I asked him if he would be prepared for India to join such a British-American Commonwealth, and he replied that he would be prepared to consider that question after the war—conditions were changing too rapidly for him to come to any conclusion at that time. He little knew what a true remark he was making, for at that very moment the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour was taking place! I asked him whether he had read Clarence K. Streit's book, *Union Now—With Britain*. He said he had not, and during some part of the proceedings he remarked: 'I don't read the history of our own times.'

"I said that my ultimate goal appeared to be somewhat similar to his, though our approach was different, as I believed profoundly in the unity of the British Commonwealth, which represents one-quarter of humanity. I also said that I hoped we would work towards universal brotherhood by degrees, permitting like-minded nations to join our family, provided they subscribe to certain broad principles of conduct, similar to those enunciated by Mr. Roosevelt. I referred to my seven years' work for the All Peoples' Association, and the lessons that painful experience had taught me, to the effect that one must not assume that the millennium was round the corner. Gandhiji interrupted me to say: 'What is the good of a millennium that is a long way off? The millennium is round the corner.'

Once again I returned to the subject of the British Commonwealth and said: "We hold that it stands for complete and equal co-operation between all races; we do not want the benefits of Dominion status to be confined to the white peoples. Would you be prepared to consider this partnership of India in the Commonwealth of our dreams, when you are convinced that the school of thought that we represent is the voice of Britain?" His reply was: "I would immediately consider the problem when I am given proof that such indeed is the opinion of Great Britain through its Government; but words are not enough, I must have proof."

We then launched out on the subject of an international Police Force, or armed force behind the moral idea. This at first he agreed to, but when I suggested that the international organisation of nations should be the only body entitled to have an air force, he dissented, and enlarged on the tragic fact that the great scientific achievements of inventions like the aeroplane had been prostituted to the purposes of war. When I said that an international Air Force, backing up the League at the time of Sanctions, would not only have prevented Mussolini from embarking on his Abyssinian campaign, but would probably have prevented the rise of Hitlerism, he said that nothing in his eyes justified war



from the air. I pointed out that leading Germans had told me that if Hitler had arisen after the last war, there was no reason that another Hitler should not arise in another twenty-five years, unless there were some international force to prevent it. He demolished this statement by saying: "There is no fear of a Hitler arising again in an ideal world. Hitler is a curse sent by God to punish human beings for the many sins they have committed."

At one stage of the conversation Gandhiji said very earnestly: "I mean no mischief," and repeated: "Having given up the use of arms, I mean no ill." I was completely convinced of his sincerity. I took this to mean that under no circumstances would he lend his weight to promote an armed rebellion against the Commonwealth. He added: "In my mission I try to discipline my thoughts and always to look upon the better side of human nature." Towards the end of the talk I said to him again: "You do want Great Britain's victory?" To which he replied: "I want to see Great Britain on the right side."

When we got up to go, he said: "These things are very tragic. I am not happy; I do not speak of them in public and have only done so to-day because you have asked me, but in the thought world I have made up my mind." The last words he spoke during the interview were: "I have no ill-will against Great Britain"—rather an astonishing statement in view of subsequent events. When he took leave of us he said: "Before you leave India, you will come and see me again?" I replied: "We should love to, Gandhiji; but we may not be able to do so." With great cordiality he said: "It is not a case of 'may' but 'must.' You must both come and see me again at the end of your tour."

As we walked away from our interview to the small rest-house, which had been placed at our disposal, my attention was caught by a hut, fifty yards away, just outside the compound across a field of waving maize. At the door I noticed a man with Mongol features, so I asked the secretary, who was accompanying us who it was; to which he replied: "That is a Japanese priest who has been staying here." When we were alone I said to my wife that I was sure he—the Japanese priest—was up to no good.

That evening in the train, on our way to Hyderabad, I tried to clarify my thoughts. After some interviews one comes away with a clear-cut outline—not so on the present occasion. I had left the Ashram disappointed and apprehensive. Only a few days before visiting Wardha I had heard the Muslim point of view explained by Jinnah and some of his co-religionists. With a couple of exceptions the Muslims to whom I had spoken stated categorically that Gandhi had no authority to speak on behalf of India. Doctor Ambedkar, the leader of the Untouchables, was also very critical of Gandhi. How then could the Mahatma seriously pretend, as he did, that Congress represented all India?

Gandhi was living in a thought world of his own which had no relation to external facts; one day there would be a rude awakening for him. Apparently he genuinely believed that, after the war, the lion and the lamb would lie down together, and all nations would unite.

Gandhi can be extraordinarily friendly and natural; when we saw him alone before our formal interview I felt hopeful. But in the afternoon, in the presence of the twelve Congressmen I was baffled. I had often heard him described as a Jekyll and Hyde—certainly Hyde was in control during our formal discussions.

The account of our visit was written before and after our interview at the Ashram, and completed the following day at the Residency, Hyderabad, when it still was vivid in our minds. Before my wife took down the account from my dictation on her machine, we had carefully checked our respective versions of the talk.

## CHAPTER IV

### FLOODTIDE OF DISASTER

*"We have had a great deal of bad news lately from the Far East and I think it is highly probable, for reasons which I shall presently explain, that we shall have a great deal more. Wrapped up in this bad news will be many tales of blunders and shortcomings, both in foresight and in action. No one will pretend for a moment that disasters like these can occur without past faults and shortcomings. I have seen all this rolling towards us like waves in a storm."* (Extract from Mr. Churchill's speech in the House of Commons, 27th January, 1942.)

During the months immediately after Pearl Harbour we were facing the blackest period of the war, with the exception, perhaps, of May and June, 1940. I shall quote freely from my diary with a view to recapturing the atmosphere of those grim days.

"We left the Ashram on Sunday evening, 7th December, and were escorted to Wardha station by several Congressmen. There was a state of complete turmoil, as the train for Bombay and our train for Hyderabad arrived almost simultaneously. In the seething mass of gesticulating humanity, a coolie seized my attaché case, in which were all my notes, my journal and other papers, thinking that they belonged to a Congressman bound for Bombay. I noticed its disappearance two or three minutes before our train left, and I only just managed to rush to the Bombay train and rescue it! Railway travelling in India in war-time is incredibly uncomfortable, worse than anything I have ever experienced; the rolling stock is old and frequently dilapidated, the dirt beyond words and the catering equipment often non-existent. . . . After the ordeal of the long interview with Gandhiji we should have liked something substantial to eat, but all we were able to get was a loaf and some chocolate. Apart from war-time conditions the trains are extra crowded because India has sent much rolling stock to the Middle East.

"We are now staying at the Residency of Hyderabad with the Gidneys. We arrived on Monday morning and a few hours later heard, from Mr. Gidney,<sup>1</sup> the staggering news of Japan's attack on Honolulu. In a way I can't help feeling glad that the war with Japan came that way, as it will unite the American people as they have never been united before. How the President and the members of the Administration have been justified. It all passes belief, for despite the warnings, the American naval and military authorities at Pearl Harbour have been caught napping. . . . It was during the afternoon that Gidney told us Japan attacked the United States without a declaration of war—what devils they are! Their conduct entirely confirms the opinion we formed during our visit to Japan four years ago.

<sup>1</sup> Now Sir Claude Gidney, K.C.I.E., C.S.I.

Apparently the Jap 'planes came from the north-west over the mountain range upon which we used so often to gaze from Halekulani.

"I was overjoyed to see that the House of Representatives' Resolution to go to war was passed by 388 votes to one; I never could have dreamt of such unity in the U.S.A. Even Lindbergh has perceived the error of his ways. It is a tremendous thing that Japan has behaved so dastardly; it will galvanise American war effort as nothing else could, but I am afraid we are in for an unpleasant time in the Pacific. One evening on getting back to our rooms a slip from Mrs. Gidney was handed to me by her bearer telling us that H.M.S. *Prince of Wales* and H.M.S. *Repulse* had been lost. We were stunned."

Madras: Sunday, 14th December—a week after Pearl Harbour. "It has been a week of major sensations. I wish we could have got more joy out of the announcement that America was in the war, but the fact that the Yanks were caught napping in Hawaii, followed two days later by the sinking of *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse*, and all the anxiety about Singapore and Penang, has clouded the issue. I can't help feeling that we ought not to have risked our two major battleships without adequate air protection. After all, surely the Government should be just as well informed as some of our American friends, who told us two or three weeks ago that they were trying to wake up their people in the United States to Japanese efficiency in the air. The Gidneys were naturally terribly upset, as we all were, but I tried to make them take the long view that America is, after all, now in the war, though as a matter of fact I felt apprehensive with regard to the relative strength in capital and up-to-date battleships of the U.S.A. and Japan.

"However one looks at it, our position is vastly different from what it was a year ago, and once America throws her whole weight into the task of producing materials of war, I don't see how Japan, or anyone else, can stand up to her for long. As far as industrialisation is concerned no other country is in the same street, and it is a wonderful thing for both of us to be fighting side by side at last. I could never have dreamt that any combination of circumstances would have made America absolutely unanimous in her declaration of war, not only on Japan, but on Germany and Italy as well. So often Americans told us that they would not send their boys to Europe 'under any circumstances,' and now they have agreed to send them anywhere.

"Of course I do think that the naval disasters will have a tremendous effect upon Australia and New Zealand, where, despite the splendid war effort they were making, there were large sections with no realisation of the seriousness of the situation. In India, of course, as far as the vast majority is concerned, there has been no appreciation of the danger. The Congress wallahs have been much too busy harping on their grievances, and pretending that British rule is as bad as German rule—so much so that I hit out the other day at several supporters of Congress, and said I wished to heavens that India could have five years of Nazi rule, then she would appreciate her freedom under the British flag. . . . We can only live from week to week, it looks at the moment as if India would be in the war area before long. . . . We were so lucky to be staying with the Gidneys during this week of tremendous happenings; they have an excellent wireless set, and we always listened in at 1.30, at 6.30 and to the B.B.C.'s special bulletin at 9 p.m. It made all the difference being with people who cared just as intensely as we did.

"We are very sorry for Australia and New Zealand, as the naval disasters will come as such a terrible shock to them. It certainly should galvanise their Governments into a realisation of the greatness of the crisis that faces the English-speaking world. . . . On the evening of the 9th I was taken to a cocktail party in the enormous Garrison Club at Secunderabad, three miles away. This is a bit of British India, leased from the Nizam; it is a very important military centre. It was so extraordinary, after living in this exotic Eastern State, to enter after a twenty minutes' drive a large building thronged with officers of the British Army and R.A.F. and their wives—one might have been at Aldershot. It was reassuring seeing them in the midst of all these grim happenings. . . . It seems to me that what India wants at this juncture, above all else, is all the aircraft she can get.

"Hyderabad is one of the two largest Indian States and is ruled by His Exalted Highness, the Nizam, an ancient ally of the Crown. The British Residency is the largest in India, and there the representative of the British *raj* resides. It is a very fine building, as large as Government House, Calcutta, built 140 years before, at a cost of a million pounds, when the East India Company believed in keeping up British prestige, though much of the cost was borne by the then Nizam! To reach our suite we crossed over a drawbridge, built in case of emergencies and still in working order. Our breakfast was brought to us by magnificent men, six feet in height, clad in immaculate white, with gold ear-rings and bare-footed."

A flight of steps led direct from our rooms into the Begum's Garden, called after an Indian girl of 14, Khair-un-Nisa (Excellent among women) who fell desperately in love with Captain J. A. Kirkpatrick, the Resident, when the Palace was built 140 years ago. She had watched him from behind the screens of purdah and at a first interview, engineered by her mother and grandmother, who were afraid of her committing suicide, persuaded him to marry her. His resolution could not stand up against the tears and wiles of the young lady, who was very beautiful, and he established her in purdah in his palace, to the consternation of the Governor-General of Calcutta. They had two children whom he sent to England to be educated, a boy and a girl, the girl lived to a ripe old age and only died at the end of the century at Torquay. The Begum's Garden is delightful; in the cool of the evening in those anxious days we took refuge there and in the cemetery which adjoins it, also in the Residency grounds. It is a little bit of old England; the huge plinths and sarcophagi once again made us realise the toll of Empire, tomb after tomb of young Englishmen in the Army or Civil Service, cut off in their prime, and the pathetic graves of their young wives and children. On one tomb was the inscription: "He never met a stranger but he made a friend"—a wonderful tribute and a salutary example for sojourners in an alien land.

The Nizam's Government, which understands the art of looking after its guests, placed a car at our disposal with a chauffeur, wearing a blue and gold turban; alongside him sat the Residency orderly, in scarlet with an ivory dagger in his belt. Hyderabad is one of the best-laid-out towns in India, its streets are wide and clean and it has old-world charm. It is a city of palaces, gardens, and public buildings, glisteningly white in the relentless sun of Central India. The colouring is vivid; the police are dressed in bright blue; many of the men wear fezzes, and even among Indian women, with their genius for colour, the female

population excel in their rainbow-hued saris. Every kind of vehicle is to be seen—fast motor cars, cutting across the purdah carts, with their screened sides, drawn by trotting cattle, for in this part of India the cattle trot almost as fast as the horses. One evening as we were driving along, an elephant loomed out of the gloaming, it was covered with a blue cloth and in the howdah was a family going out to dine. The city has a distinctive site, dominated by the old Fort of Golconda, and at the very edge of the town is a series of hills strewn with volcanic-looking huge boulders. Latterly local magnates have been building modern houses among the boulders, and the result is a scene of incongruous contrast.

A men's dinner party was given by the President of the Council, or Prime Minister, of the Nizam's Government, the Nawab of Chhatari, in honour of Sir Patrick Playfair of the R.A.F. The Resident and I drove up in the dark to the Shah Manzil Palace, in front of which were playing fountains, floodlit. Most of the members of the Government were present, and my neighbour at dinner was the Commandant of the Nizam's Army, Major-General Syed Ahmed El Edroos, born in South Arabia. The General had just flown back from Malaya where he had been visiting one of the Nizam's regiments, at that moment fighting the Japanese—this was the first time I had had direct contact with the war in Malaya. The following day I watched detachments of the Nizam's Army drilling; it included an Arab regiment and Afridis from the North-West Frontier.

The Nawab had asked me to come round for a quiet talk, and I visited him in his office in the Government building. I was delighted to find that he was a great believer in the importance of British-American co-operation—he was one of the first Indian statesmen to express these views; so many of the leaders were so busy considering internal problems that they had little time left over for taking broad surveys of world trends. He believed in the future mission of the British Commonwealth. We then discussed some of the past causes of friction between Great Britain and India, and the Nawab pointed out that certainly up to the last war, many of the best jobs in the Indian Civil Service, and other professions, had been reserved for Britons—jobs which very naturally Indians felt that they could have filled adequately. This led us on to the eternal question of slights suffered by sensitive Indians at the hands of Europeans, both at home and in India, and resultant misunderstandings.

Nawab Mahdi Yar Jung, Minister for Education, invited us to tea in his attractive house amid the boulders on one of the hill-tops. Our host and his wife were surrounded by their pretty daughters and their sons-in-laws, and received us with Eastern ceremony in a large drawing-room. Two of the daughters recently returned from England, had been educated at Harrow and spoke English fluently. Their mother had only recently come out of purdah, the daughters were proud of their own emancipation, and assured me that purdah would rapidly disappear. We all sat round in a formal circle, and after tea the conversation consisted of a duologue between the Nawab and myself, as it is considered lacking in respect for the younger generation to participate.

The Gidneys gave a cocktail party in order to enable us to meet various sections of the community. I had a long talk with Mrs. Rustomjee, whose husband had spent his life in the I.C.S.; she was a whole-hearted supporter of Congress, and not for the first time was I struck by the intolerant attitude of many of the Congress supporters that "black winter." I think many of them genuinely

believed the British Empire was on its last legs, and the blow to the prestige of the white man, as a result of Pearl Harbour, and the sinking of *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse*, was very great. On the principle of hitting a man when he is down, they seemed to enjoy pouring out invective against the British—I suppose it was a case of wiping out past scores. Undoubtedly Gandhi's consistent campaign of vituperation against the British was bearing fruit; you have only got to go on repeating things sufficiently often to get people to believe anything, as we know to our cost with the examples of Germany and Italy before us. Not since the immediate post-war era in Ireland in 1919, when Sinn Fein was carrying on its campaign of hate, had I met anything like this. The prospect for Britain was wholly black, and many Indians made the most of every opportunity of rubbing in "home truths" whenever they met an Englishman. It was very disturbing to find that the British case was largely going by default; it seemed to be no one's job to put it fairly and firmly before the public.

As an antidote to the unpleasant sensations I experienced while talking to Mrs. Rustomjee, it was a relief to turn to quiet and non-assertive Miss Linnell, the British Principal of Mahbubia College, the leading girls' school in Hyderabad, in whose hands was placed the training of Hyderabad's young womanhood. From other quarters I learnt what Hyderabad owed to her and other British educationists. The largest institute for lepers in India is in Hyderabad State—a standing testimony to the devoted work of a British couple.

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We paid three separate visits to Madras, before Christmas and in the New Year, after our return from Mysore and Travancore. More people speak English in Madras than in any other part of India, including the household and hotel staffs, and all assistants in shops and offices. When I inquired the reason I was told that Tamil is such a difficult language, that very few British residents were able to learn it, so that there was no alternative for the inhabitants but to master English! I think, however, that a contributory cause is undoubtedly the fact that there are many more Christians in South India than elsewhere, and a large number of British-run missions and schools.

There was a very friendly note about the welcome we received from Indian friends in Madras. At a well-attended meeting of the Overseas League, the majority of those present were Indians and the Chairman, Sir Mahomet Usman, spoke strongly in favour of India remaining within the British Commonwealth. We were entertained by the Maharaja of Pithapuram and his son the Yuvaraja, and appreciated these opportunities of meeting so many leading Indians.

"Government House, Guindy (to quote from my diary), stands in an enormous park six miles from Madras. The Governor is on tour, but Lady Hope is a very kind hostess and enables us to make many useful and interesting contacts. From our rooms we look across the park, with its 2,000 deer, to a background of palm trees and lagoons. In the middle of our bedroom is what looks like a muslin tent, the only really comfortable anti-mosquito net which I have ever come across. Inside the 'tent,' in addition to the beds, are two reading tables with lamps; instead of getting out of bed and struggling to extricate oneself from the mosquito net, there is a three- or four-foot space around the beds inside the 'tent.' The bottom of the muslin net is weighted with small

sandbags to prevent any of the insect tribe getting inside; in the morning we realised the need for all these precautions as the dressing-table and floor of our room were littered with every type of insect, and they were even floating in quantities in our bath. Just outside our room in the passage, a Government House servant, in flowing white robe, and red and gold turban and sash across the shoulder, squats silently.

"In the streets of Madras we have often seen large and heavy wooden carts that would be drawn by a horse or donkey at home, piled with goods, drawn by two men wearing only loincloths, and pushed from the back by two others. The two men at the back use their heads for the purpose of propelling; they wear rings presumably of coconut matting on their heads, and walk along in a bent position, their heads butting the back of the cart, pushing with their two hands as well, so that the sweat pours down their bare bodies. From the artistic point of view these glistening mahogany-coloured bodies are very lovely in the sunshine, but they represent the life of servitude for millions."

My journal of 19th December records a depressing talk with A. A. Hayles, the Editor of the *Madras Mail*: "He told me the news, which has not yet been published, that during the treacherous Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbour, 5,000 American soldiers and sailors were killed. Of course we have now seen the cables relating thereto in the papers, and this quite apart from the terrible damage done to the American warships; it is too awful to think of. . . . The lack of preparedness in India is alarming; I am glad to see references to it in the Indian Press. There has been quite a stampede from Calcutta, and a great exodus is taking place from Madras, as they all think that the Japs in Burma and North-West Malaya are uncomfortably close to us, which is perfectly true. We are very much concerned about our friends in Malaya. I pray to Heaven that Japan won't get Singapore and Penang, because that would give her wonderful bases for submarines in the Indian Ocean. Of course we are desperately anxious about Hongkong and Singapore, and especially the all-importance of the latter, for we can't spare ships from the Mediterranean."

21st December: "We dread turning to the papers these days and hate to read of all that Hongkong is going through and of the evacuation of Penang. It is so incredible to think of the Japs being in control of the mainland opposite Penang; there must have been some bad slip-up somewhere, the usual case of over-confidence. When we were in Singapore everyone seemed entirely confident; they evidently did not foresee Thailand's going in with the Japs, and greatly underestimated Japanese air power."

"I was particularly glad while in Madras to meet my friend, Mr. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, who in his day was considered one of India's greatest orators, and whom I had not seen for ten years; he has, alas, grown much older, and has a bleached look. Only that morning he had received from a friend a cutting from the *Calcutta Statesman*, quoting a speech he made in 1922, which he had entirely forgotten, but in which he had foretold a great conflagration in the Pacific. He still believes that India's destiny should be within the British Commonwealth, and it was good to hear a man in his position saying so; but he also thinks that the British Government should move quickly; he would certainly be opposed to anything in the nature of Pakistan."

"Two of the British residents who have been longest in India we met at Government House, Madras; one was Dr. Foss Westcott, the Metropolitan of

Calcutta, who came out to India in 1889, and whom we watched playing tennis in his 79th year, with the energy of a man of fifty. The other was Colonel Thomson of the Indian Medical Service, who left his native Ulster in 1888, beating the Metropolitan by a year. But the record of both of these pales beside that of the Rev. George W. Sawday,<sup>1</sup> of the Wesleyan Mission in Mysore, who left England in 1876! He is now in his 90th year and his influence has done much for British prestige in Mysore State.

"We notice (10th January) a great change in Madras, after two weeks of absence; on the platform are A.R.P. notices, and we passed the headquarters of the A.R.P. and Fire Fighting Organisation. Numerous shops are closed, there was a procession of ox-carts conveying the household goods of the fleeing townfolk to the station. The hotel is very empty, there are large bins of sand and stacks of sandbags everywhere. On our arrival we were handed a typed notice with instructions as to what to do in the event of an air raid. We are constantly reminded of war-time England for the first time in India. Apart from our sea voyage the black-out is the most effective we have seen since leaving home. A resident of many years' standing told me that many of his Indian friends are getting very panicky; evidently Fifth Columnists had been spreading rumours that the British were sending away their women and children, which was not the case, and the authorities have had to issue a notice to this effect to reassure the population. I can't help feeling that a little of this close-up war will be very good for India, though of course this state of emergency makes travelling anything but easy."

19th January, 1942. "One reason why this part of India is beginning to get war-conscious is that both Rangoon and the Malay States depend largely upon South India for coolie labour. Nearly all the Tamils in Madras Presidency have relations working on the rubber plantations in Malaya or doing coolie labour in Burma. The letters which they are now getting from these places tell of the air raids and are especially dwelling on the fact that the Japs have definitely machine-gunned and bombed Indians, despite their promises to the contrary! The Japs are naturally doing all they can to work up fifth-column activity here, and we have been told that they are meeting with some success; especially among the young, who foolishly believe Japanese promises of friendship to a 'fellow Eastern people' and who try and stir up feeling on every possible occasion against the British."

"There were two people I especially wanted to see here, both high up in Congress. Mr. S. Satyamurti,<sup>2</sup> former Mayor of Madras, and Mr. C. Rajagopalachari, former Premier of Madras Presidency, and a close friend of Gandhi's. I had last met the ex-Mayor at the party given to us by the Dewan of Mysore; he wore European clothes on that occasion. Mr. Satyamurti had asked me to visit him in his house in Madras and presumably wished to impress me with his complete Hinduism. When he came forward to the verandah to greet me I did not recognise him; he was barefoot, in flowing white homespun dhoti, and had three horizontal stripes of white paint on his forehead, with a red spot underneath, to signify his adherence to Shiva. I found him one of the most reasonable Congress people I had yet talked to, and I gathered that he thought, even at this eleventh hour, the situation could be saved by prompt action on the

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Sawday died in the autumn of 1944.

<sup>2</sup> Since died.



part of the Viceroy. He thought a group of twenty prominent Indians—to include the eleven Premiers and ex-Premiers of the Provinces, and a representative each of Congress, the Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha, the Untouchables, the Sikhs, and the European community—should be invited to Delhi by the Viceroy, with the object of forming an all-Indian Government at the centre, for the duration of the war, all this with a view to getting popular government re-established in the seven Provinces where, since Congress refused to co-operate in October, 1939, the local Governors are carrying on. He thought that only by making a supreme effort to get Congress on our side would it be possible to organise India's war effort on a proper scale.

"He thinks the time has come for something dramatic to be done if the clouds of misunderstanding between India and Great Britain are to be dispelled, and suggests that Mr. Churchill should fly to India on a short visit, or, if this is not practicable, that Mr. Churchill should make one of his utterances appealing for Indian co-operation and refer to Indians as our brothers, promising that at the end of the war the people of India would be free to decide their own future. He told me that a great number of Indians listen in to the Berlin and Tokyo broadcasts, and he said that he did not think our broadcasting was nearly as good."

"My next interview was with Mr. Rajagopalachari, one of the most able politicians in India. I visited him in his house—he, too, was clad in homespun and barefoot, and he came to greet me on the threshold in this delightful Indian way. Rajaji seemed to me a taller and more austere Gandhi, with views somewhat similar to those of the Mahatma. He says the Government of India has always been too late, and if the Viceroy's recent offer had been made in September, 1939, the whole history of India might have been different. He said the people of India are getting apprehensive about Britain's ability to defend India, when they recall some of the over-optimistic statements by the British authorities in Malaya; and now, in face of what is happening there before their very eyes, their confidence in the power of the British to defend them is vanishing. He said that up to 1931 Gandhi and he would have been prepared to accept Dominion status for India, but that day is gone, although if we gave India her freedom to-day she would be prepared to make a treaty of permanent alliance with us. He certainly possesses one of the most subtle brains I have yet come across."

(Madras.) "I went round to the offices of the *Hindu*, one of the leading papers in India, printed in English, Indian-owned, and entirely Indian-run, without a single Englishman on the staff. Their command of the English language is most remarkable. I saw two of their chief editors, and found that they were keen readers of the *Spectator*. I was encouraged to find that so important a paper, run by Hindus, and ardently upholding Indian nationalism, was willing to accept Dominion status within the Commonwealth."

## CHAPTER V

### MYSORE AND TRAVANCORE

IN NO PART OF INDIA IS THE VISITOR MADE MORE WELCOME THAN IN THE progressive States of Mysore and Travancore. Delightful guest-houses are kept by the Maharajas in the two capitals, Mysore City and Trivandrum, with an

extremely efficient organisation for looking after his comfort. A visit to South India is essential in order to get a comprehensive picture of the sub-continent, and for the Christian it is an encouraging experience to be in districts where a third of the population holds the same belief.

There are two Bangalores, the Bangalore which contains the administrative offices of the State Government, and the British cantonment of Bangalore, which is a British garrison town. The State Government maintains very attractive Botanical Gardens, where my wife was able to get many of her botanical problems solved, as we had great difficulty in obtaining reliable books on Indian flora. We made friends with the Indian Superintendent, who was most helpful, and said he looked back upon his year at Kew as a landmark in his life.

We were taken to see the Legislative Council of Mysore functioning; it was an impressive sight for believers in parliamentary institutions, even on a limited franchise. It was question time and the procedure was exactly the same as in the House of Commons, on a small scale. There were sixty-nine members. The debates take place either in English or in Kanarese, the local language. The President corresponds to our Speaker, and everything is carried out in the best parliamentary tradition. The English of some of the members was none too fluent and we admired the dexterity of the President who caught all their remarks. There was a "scrap" between one of the Congress members—for Mysore boasts its own Congress Party, more or less affiliated to the Congress Party in British India—and the Muslim Minister for Education. However much Indians may abuse Great Britain, the British have largely shaped their political thought, and it is extraordinary hearing these people, sometimes in broken English, discussing the health of villages, the inefficient water supply, and the frailty of university examiners. I wonder what would have happened to these individuals if they had asked questions of this kind in a totalitarian State!

"This afternoon" (says my diary) "we were taken to see Bangalore's Mental Hospital, supposed to be the most up-to-date in India. It is run by a Hindu, possessed of a real fervour and imagination, Dr. M. V. Govindaswamy, who has studied in England, America and in Germany. The present quarters were only opened four years ago and consist of a series of one-story buildings, on a large common, outside the town. It is the only lunatic asylum we have ever seen that is not surrounded by enclosing walls; the Superintendent attaches great importance to the psychological effect this has on the patients, and only managed to get the innovation accepted in the face of great opposition. The dangerous cases are, of course, kept under lock and key, but for the most part the lunatics are permitted to wander at large. There have only been rare cases of lunatics escaping and they have always been quickly recaptured. The 300 inmates are taught weaving and other handicrafts. Another innovation is that, except in the case of sex-maniacs, he employs women nurses to look after the men, and says they are much more successful in handling male patients than the usual hospital orderly. The inmates are allowed to wear their own clothes; the Superintendent tries to take only lunatics for whom there is a reasonable chance of recovery, and his percentage of cures is sixty. We were taken in to see twelve Italian prisoners of war, with whom we talked, and found they were glad to meet anyone who knew their own country. It was encouraging to learn that the doctor considered the chances of recovery for sufferers from shell shock and war strain very high."

"We also visited the enormous camp of Italian prisoners of war a few miles out. They were behind barbed wire barricades, in a veritable world of its own set on bare uplands; they were playing football and hockey. We were told that they were very well fed and looked after, but the officers we saw looked rather disconsolate."

8th January, 1942. "In this south-eastern part of India there is a great tendency to panic since the Japanese invasion of Malaya and the bombing of Rangoon. Many thousands of people are fleeing from the eastern seaboard, even here in Mysore, 300 miles from the coast, the population is 'getting the wind up.' . . . A man who has lived in Japan for nearly twenty years told me he could not understand how the Americans and ourselves had been caught napping; he had never had the slightest doubt that Japan would attack at her own time; he thought it was criminal for *Prince of Wales* not to have had adequate air escort. There is very much a sense of approaching war in South India, and everywhere A.R.P. services are being organised. Fraser<sup>1</sup> has a very good radio set at the Bangalore Residency and we got up-to-date news from Malaya, the look of which we did not much like, though we are delighted to read of the appointment of Wavell as G.O.C. South Pacific."

"Fraser took me out to see the big new aircraft factory, the only one in India, seven miles from Bangalore, and employing a couple of thousand men, yet the site of the factory was jungle a year ago. It is American-run, and there are twenty-five American superintendents. The young Indian mechanics look alert, and are evidently adapting themselves well to their new life. It is equipped with the latest type of American machinery and we watched the assembling of planes. The factory consists of an enormous building, open to the air at both ends, grave hooded crows sat perched in the roofing watching these strange goings on. Outside, as a contrast to the all-prevailing modernity, were carts drawn by oxen, and women coolies carrying large baskets of building material on their heads."

I had several talks with Sir Mirza Ismail, a Muslim, Dewan of Mysore for fourteen years under the late Maharaja, and one of the ablest men in India. It was during his tenure of office, and largely owing to the Maharaja, that Mysore became one of the most highly industrialised States in India. His late Highness and the Dewan were at school together and knew each other's minds inside out. Sir Mirza is of Persian descent and does not subscribe to the policy of Pakistan. He thinks the misunderstandings between Great Britain and India can be overcome, and advocates the immediate summoning of an official conference of twenty-one Indians with a British secretary to work out the future constitution of India. He suggested that all the ex-Premiers who had had experience in working local autonomy from 1937 to the outbreak of war, should be included. The weak part of his scheme seemed to me that he ignores the Muslim League and the Depressed Classes led by Dr. Ambedkar.

The Guest House at Mysore, called Government House, was once the British Residency, built at the beginning of the nineteenth century in classical style. We had a delightful little suite opening on to the flat roof, and looked out upon what is undoubtedly one of the best-designed modern cities in India, thanks largely to the initiative of the late Maharaja, and the constructive genius of Sir Mirza Ismail. Mysore with its palaces, hospitals and institutions is an object-lesson of what a modern Indian city can be.

<sup>1</sup> Colonel D. de M. S. Fraser, C.S.I., C.I.E., British Resident.

The Maharaja is a remarkable young man, only twenty-four years of age, and had succeeded his uncle eighteen months before. He has a wealth of thought in those dark eyes of his, and this with his natural dignity conveys a sense of deep sincerity. He is a ruler that any country might be proud of. Like most Indian rulers, he speaks perfect English; he is widely read and keeps in touch with modern Anglo-Saxon thought. He had lately been studying Sanskrit and considered it should be included in the curriculum of all intellectuals. His own mother-tongue is Kanarese. He was of the opinion that English should remain the second language of India, and saw no necessity for making Hindi or Urdu the all-India language, as recommended in some quarters. The Maharaja had visited England just before the war broke out, and was there for the first few weeks, but had to cut his visit short. He returned to India via Rome, and the talk he had with the Pope made a deep impression on him; in fact, he was particularly struck by the wide outlook of the Head of the Roman Church, and thought gratefully of the welcome he and his father were given because they came from a country "where religion occupies the first place in the life of the community," as the Pope expressed it, adding that what the West suffered from was "an engulfing materialism." The young Maharaja was delighted to find the Pope had studied the Vedantic writings and had an understanding appreciation of the mystical side of Hinduism. The Maharaja himself is deeply interested in religious thought and philosophy of all kinds, and in our talk he kept emphasising the common background and basic root principles of all the leading Faiths. He thinks that there can be no satisfactory system of government which ignores religion, that there must be a moral background to everything, and that daily life should be consecrated by worship. He struck us as one of the most genuinely religious men we met in India.

As regards politics, His Highness is progressive in outlook, and believes in an all-India Federation. Like so many leading Hindus, he does not approve of the Pakistan idea, for, as he pointed out, Hindus and Muslims in Mysore had lived like brothers down the ages. He was fully aware of the importance of British-American relations, and thought there would undoubtedly be close co-operation between the Anglo-Saxon Powers in the post-war era. He had just been reading Clarence K. Streit's book on *Federal Union*, and some of Sir Norman Angell's recent works.

The Maharaja is a very tall and striking figure, and (as my diary recalls) "wore a white frock coat, buttoned to the chin, white jodhpurs, and gold brocade slippers on his bare feet. His coat was bedecked with jewelled buttons, rubies and diamonds, and on the second fingers of both hands he wore enormous diamond rings, one of the stones as large as a small marble. His turban, made of lovely gold material and pink gauze shimmering with gold, was the finest headgear I had ever seen."

The Maharaja has a modern dairy farm a few miles outside the town, where 350 animals are kept amid ideal surroundings. The weather of course simplifies the problem of the breeder, for no outer walls are required, nor is it necessary to provide any form of straw or bedding, as the cattle lie on the concrete pavement. They are always bred with the idea of milk or in the case of the blue-grey Mysore cattle, for trotting. We have been so astonished in South India to see cattle, either conveying family parties or merchandise, trotting along the roads; being an orthodox Hindu, His Highness naturally does not breed cattle for slaughter.

We were warned by the steward of the farm not to approach the cattle too closely as they might be startled by Europeans! Among the animals was a magnificent Holstein bull; he appeared quite submissive to the small attendant who looked after him, though he could have knocked him down with a swish of his tail. One of the problems which has always puzzled us since we have been in India, is that in the parks and open places of the cities, Brahmini bulls and bulls of European stock, graze quietly and pay no attention to the passer-by, and we have never heard of a single case of a human being having been attacked by them; so we wonder whether it is something in the Indian climate that effects this change.

As it was the feast of the full moon there was a big Hindu ceremony after sundown, in the open space within the grounds of the Palace. All Mysore was making its way thither, in their best clothes, the women looking exquisite in their elegant *saris*. There must have been a crowd of at least 20,000. There were twelve huge carnival-like figures, each of them about 15 feet high, that walked along, a man was inside and his head did not reach up to the hips of the giant, we could see the small square opening through which he breathed, just below the giant's belt, and the incongruously tiny feet. Then came troops of fantastically dressed people who danced and beat drums, followed by Brahmins (high-caste Hindus). They carried something that looked like the Ark of the Covenant, under an enormous "tea-cosy"; within the ark was supposed to be the god Shiva. The participants danced round in endless circles, finally approaching an enormous picture, mounted on a canvas frame, 30 or 40 feet high, of the "Monster" who personifies evil. As Shiva approached, an electric dart struck the monster in vital parts and a red fluid gushed out from the region of the heart. The huge canvas was then torn down, showing a large picture of Shiva, *à la* St. George, with the monster at his feet. The Brahmins recited a poem through a loud-speaker and fireworks were let off amid rejoicings.

I do not think it is possible to over estimate the effect of the work of those British men and women, who are consecrating their lives to medical missions. Among the activities of the late Rev. George Sawday of the Wesleyan Mission, Mysore, is the Holdsworth Memorial Hospital, called the House of Compassion. In this particular hospital, started by Mr. Sawday forty years ago, there are 150 beds for women and children and a big out-patient department. The British staff consists of two lady surgeons, who are assisted by two Indian lady doctors, two British nursing sisters, and forty Indian nurses and assistants. We looked at the list of the day's operations and marvelled at the work these two quiet and devoted Englishwomen were doing. There is a little chapel, and a great feeling that the whole work was being done out of love, so different from many institutions of the kind. The child patients looked happy. On a verandah were rows of straw cots, covered with muslin, partially to protect the babies against mosquitoes, but even more important—against the crows. Our Indian friend, Mr. da Costa, referred to the tremendous effect the work of British missionaries has had.

"Subversive elements have undoubtedly been concentrating their attention on India's disillusioned youth. Several times in South India we heard the possibility openly discussed that the Japanese might drop Bose by plane, probably somewhere in Bengal. If Japan ever invades the country much will depend on how promptly the authorities react; if the right leadership is given the pro-British

forces can be rallied. Owing to the lack of economic opportunity many disgruntled Indian youths make good Fifth Column recruits, and appear to be succumbing to the insidious propaganda. From my talks with some of the advisers of the rulers of Indian States I gather there is a definite feeling that the Government of India has not made the most of its opportunities in enlisting the support of some of the Maharajas, who feel out in the cold and complain of the unsympathetic atmosphere of Delhi."

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"Travancore is one of the most important Indian States. The 500-mile journey to Trivandrum is one of the most beautiful we have yet made in India, and constantly reminds us of Java, it is entirely unlike Northern India. Distant blue mountains, rich vermilion soil, every shade of green paddy field, plantations of tapioca, banana groves and palm trees, and every scene peopled with toiling humanity; the women in bright colours, the men naked save for a slip, oxen or water buffaloes dragging ploughs, and all day long the never-ending pageant of village life. . . . The villages in Travancore consist of houses with walls of red clay or whitewash, and thatched roofs that jut out. Around the villages are buffaloes, goats, hens, black sheep, tethered baby calves, and inquisitive small black pigs, wandering among endless squatting white-clad crowds, with the women in bright colours moving about and carrying huge brass pitchers on their heads, and incredible numbers of small naked children with distended stomachs. . . . At a wayside junction we suddenly saw a troop of monkeys running up and down the roofs of the carriages of a train drawn up on the other side of the platform; they clambered down the sides of the compartments, and sat on the open ledges of the carriages, looking for food; they were quite tame and took bananas out of my hand."

We stayed at Trivandrum in one of the delightful Government Guest Houses, which we had to ourselves; from our windows we got a wonderful view of the Western Ghat Mountains. Our smallest wishes were attended to and we were waited on by an Indian *khidmatgar*<sup>1</sup> who had spent ten years of his life as a bar-tender in Brighton, Bexhill and Tunbridge Wells. We rejoiced in our tropic garden in full flower in January, for Travancore knows no winter. The hillside was ablaze with frangipani, bougainvillea and Judas tree. "For several nights on our hill-top" (says my diary) "our rest has been disturbed by the most fiendish howling and wailing—our first experience of jackals; it sounded like a chorus of Dante's lost spirits in hell, shortly afterwards it was followed by an outburst of dogs barking for miles around. The jackals come into our garden nightly. Last night they deprived us of several hours' sleep. I suppose in time our subconscious selves will become impervious to both jackals and the plague of ants."

The Dewan of Travancore, Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar—known to all his friends as "Sir C. P."—is a lawyer by profession and served for five years on the Viceroy's Council, under Lord Willingdon. Apart from speaking several Indian languages, and possessing perfect command of English, he is familiar with French, Italian and Sanskrit. He is a great administrator and is one of the best-known figures in contemporary India. No detail escapes his attention, during our ten

<sup>1</sup> Waiter.

days in Trivandrum he rang us up each morning at 8.15 a.m. to plan our daily programme. "Sir C. P." is a patron of the arts and possesses some paintings by Tagore's brother, representing the modern Indian school. We had many interesting talks, and he said that a psychological moment had arrived in British-Indian relations: on a certain date, specified by Great Britain, India should be allowed to decide its own destiny, and no restrictions of any kind should be imposed. He was certain that India would choose permanent association with Great Britain if given an unfettered choice. He has always been a great believer in the British Commonwealth, and in the contribution made by the English-speaking world to humanity.

"Yesterday Sir C. P. came in to have a final talk with us. He is the most amazingly well-informed man we have met in India, and is prepared to discuss any subject, political, literary, historical, philosophic or religious. I was glad to hear he thinks that English must remain the second language of India and her destiny is inextricably entwined with the English-speaking peoples. I asked him whether he thought Christianity had a future in India, and he replied he assuredly did. He says that the teaching of Christ is exercising an increasingly great influence on Hindu thought, and that he would not be surprised if in a couple of hundred years Christianity, as interpreted by India, played a leading part in the country.

"In Trivandrum I sat one day at lunch at Sir C. P.'s home, next to a very nice Indian woman, the wife of the leading doctor. Her husband told me he was in Edinburgh eight years before, attending a medical conference, but on arrival he drove right round Edinburgh without being able to find anywhere to stay. This was entirely owing to colour prejudice, and the kind of thing that makes one despair.

"At the early Celebration on Sunday, there was a congregation of about thirty, but apart from ourselves there were only three other British. The celebrant was an Indian priest, and we loved worshipping with all these Indians. The women were in *saris* and barefoot; the man who handed the plate was clad in a white flowing garment and was also barefoot. When we left, a service in Malayalam was just starting, and later in the day there was to be one in Tamil.

"We spent several peaceful hours in the garden cemetery surrounding the Anglican church, as I wanted to try and paint the jacaranda trees; the paths were carpeted with their mauve blossoms—a lovely contrast to the old grey plinths and sarcophagi. The caretaker and organist, a Christian, has been attached to the church for forty years, and regards the precincts almost as his personal possession; he it was who planted the jacarandas fifteen years ago, and he was evidently gratified by our admiration. He was quite surprised to find two Britons visiting his cemetery. He told H. there are many cobras in it as they know they will be undisturbed, which put a slight damper on our enthusiasm for studying the ancient inscriptions. There are the usual monoliths and tombs, recording the cutting-off in their prime of the early pioneers, their wives and children. He gave a sad story of the gradual disappearance of the British congregation—there are but few British folk left in Travancore, apart from the missionaries and teachers.

"Travancore is the best-educated State in India, over 60 per cent of the boys between 10 and 15 are literate, largely owing to Christian missions. "All the instruction in the universities is in English, and most of the shop-keepers speak our tongue; and the students of the secondary schools are well versed in English

literature. The Director of Archæology, an Indian, told us that Shelley is the first favourite with Indians, then Keats, Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning, whom they find too difficult, comes last. Shakespeare is, of course, in a class by himself. He told us he read Shakespeare, Newman, and Burke every day of his life. He declared that no one can ever say what India owes to the missionaries. It is sad to think that there are forty-two different sects.

"Six years ago the present Maharaja, supported by Sir C. P., passed a law entitling the depressed classes to the right of temple entry. One of the results has been that a number of Untouchables, who had gone over to Christianity, have now reverted to Hinduism."

Travancore is apparently one of the few parts of India where purdah has never been practised. Women play an important part in public affairs; here and in the neighbouring State of Cochin, the matriarchal system prevails. The sons of the Maharaja's sisters are heirs, "because the blood royal runs certainly through their veins."<sup>1</sup>

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"We have just got back from spending an interesting afternoon with the Maharaja—a young man of thirty, who has been ruler since 1931—and the Maharani, his mother. He is still unmarried, which is unusual for an Indian ruler. There are a number of royal palaces as every Maharaja lives in a new palace, because it is against tradition for a ruler to occupy the dwelling of his predecessor. Every former palace is kept as a shrine with an everlasting light burning in the room of the Maharaja. The theory of the divine right is much in evidence, and the veneration shown to ancestors of the royal house reminds one of Japan.

"On arriving at the palace we were met by a self-assured young equerry, with whom we discussed the latest phase of the war. When I made a remark on the dastardly attack of the Japanese on Pearl Harbour he did not seem at all horrified. This gave us the uncomfortable feeling that our Western standards of international good faith are not appreciated in some quarters, and that brute force is what inspires admiration. But his views are certainly not shared by the Maharaja and those in authority, I am glad to say.

"On entering the drawing-room we were welcomed by a slim young man of medium height, clad in white, barefoot, and without any jewels; he came forward and shook hands with us very naturally. He spoke excellent English, had a charming smile, and very often during the conversation exclaimed: "Oh, I say," just as an Englishman might. The Maharani is very young-looking, has a remarkable personality, and is a shrewd judge of men and affairs.

"We discussed a serious local problem by no means confined to Travancore, but naturally especially acute here, namely, the great dearth of suitable positions for educated youth. The fact is that there are not enough jobs to go round, for the State is not yet sufficiently industrialised. Another local problem is the dependence of the State upon its rice imports from Burma, and no one knows how long supplies will be available. The Government is considering the question of extending the area of rubber cultivation, but it is treading warily because after the last war there was enormous expansion, and when the slump came the local planters incurred heavy losses.

<sup>1</sup> Voyage to Suratt in the year 1689. Ovington.



"The Japanese danger is very much realised here, and the prevailing view of the present outlook is taken as extremely grave. The authorities fear that in the case of a Japanese invasion, the anti-British elements may side with the Japs, and use the opportunity for stirring up trouble for the British.

"The Maharaja was much concerned about the communal difficulties in India, and had little sympathy with Pakistan, which is natural in the circumstances, as North India is 2,000 miles away. His Highness was deeply interested in economic problems and especially in Mr. Henry Ford's success in having many of the component parts used in the manufacture of his motor cars made in small communities. The fact that big industry need not necessarily be centralised was of obvious interest to Travancore with its large and scattered population.

"The Maharani has given much thought to the problem of providing the right type of education for the ruler of an Indian State, and she purposely had her son educated in Travancore. She has very definite views on the dangers of sending young Indian Princes to Europe for their education, and referred to instances during the past forty years of young rulers who sought to imitate the undesirable side of modern Western civilisation. They usually returned to their native land too much addicted to alcohol and horse-racing, and seemed totally unprepared for the very serious business of governing a State under modern conditions. I thought of some of the young Indian Princes I had known in Europe, who certainly seemed more at home at Ascot or Auteuil than in Council Chambers of State. We agreed that the chief equipment for a successful ruler was an adequate supply of common sense.

"On Tuesday, 13th January, 1942, an important Hindu festival, which takes place only every sixth year, was celebrated within the walled enclosure of the old Fort, wherein is a very sacred Hindu temple, the most important in the State, dedicated to Vishnu. It was here that in 1750 a previous Maharaja had handed over the State to the Deity, and undertaken to rule Travancore as his servant.

"On this occasion the temple was lit up by 100,000 lights, and all Hindu Trivandrum, clad in white and naked to the waist, were on their way to join in the religious festival in which His Highness was participating. . . . Near the temple are two enormous tanks, five or six times the size of a Western swimming pool, with a succession of steps leading down to the water, and surrounded by palms; here the faithful could be seen immersing themselves before their prayers.

"Trivandrum is well provided with museums and art galleries, and several are the residences of former rulers. It has an excellent modern picture gallery with a fine collection of the works of Nicholas Roerich, the Russian painter, who has a building devoted to his work in America, he is regarded as the greatest interpreter of the Himalayas. He spent five years travelling in the fastnesses of Central Asia before settling down in Kulu Valley. By some he is regarded as the greatest inspirational painter since Blake, and he certainly has a marvellous command of colour. The Maharani showed us at the Palace one of his pictures of which she is particularly proud—one can literally see in it the Himalayan snows melting.

"The Maharaja's elephant stables are the largest in India, and at the time of our visit there were nineteen elephants standing about in the courtyard. Each elephant is boarded out with his mahout, who is given a daily allowance to pay for his lodger's consumption of coconut palm leaves. Each elephant has two mahouts. The elephants assemble at the stable twice a week; among them was

the largest elephant we had ever seen, his mahout could easily have fitted into one of his front legs. We asked to see him lie down, the mahout in a low voice muttered something in Malayalam, and the elephant very cumbrously lowered himself on to his hind quarters. Up country in Travancore elephants are still used for lumbering, and it ranks as one of the few districts in India where wild elephants can still be found.

"One of the elephants we saw had a chain round its body attached to one of its legs, we were told it was rather vicious as it suffers from digestive trouble! Incidentally, when we watched these enormous animals *en masse*, we could not help thinking that there must be more vitamins in greenstuff than people usually admit, and meat is certainly not required to make muscle.

~ "Owing to the fact that the demand for elephants has gone down, the market value is but the equivalent of £25. Capturing and training an elephant costs more than that, and a notable problem is that up country there are whole districts being overrun by wild elephants. In the Maharaja's stables we were shown the wonderful head-dresses still worn by the elephants on six ceremonial occasions each year. It has an enormous gilt and bright coloured ornament hanging between the animal's eyes and right down its trunk, and adds an 'Arabian Nights' touch to the ceremonies. His Highness, who is a very devout Hindu, keeps one or two elephants at a number of temples as well."

The drive from Trivandrum to Cape Comorin, fifty miles away, is very beautiful, flanked by the Cardamon Hills, and along a concrete highway, one of the few roads in India which has no dust problem. Travancore is practically a continuous village, all the way we passed huts and dwellings. Our progress was slow as we had to thread our way through an endless procession of ox-carts, or women, who held themselves like princesses, with baskets of fruit on their heads, men in white dhotis, stripped to the waist, carrying umbrellas, herds of cattle and water buffalo, and black and chocolate-coloured goats.

We passed many churches, Catholic and Protestant, and Salvation Army halls. We went through picturesque and exotic-looking small towns, with lotus-covered ponds, in which men, sitting in round cauldron-shaped craft, paddled themselves about with their hands. Indian Salvationists, the men in scarlet jackets, and orange skirts, were proclaiming their faith. There were constant Hindu shrines, and wonderful old banyan trees, temples and places of pilgrimage, and a little shrine in the midst of a large tank, to which the Deity is conveyed by boat on the occasion of great festivals. . . . And on to Cape Comorin, the southernmost point of India, in time to watch the sunset, orange and pink, over the palm trees and the rocks. The cross of the little Catholic Convent Chapel standing out against the setting sun was a comforting sight after all the strange Deities we have seen during the past months. . . . Next morning we visited the Convent grounds, and watched the Indian nuns instructing two or three hundred children in the building with its long colonnaded verandahs, looking spotlessly clean.

There is no doubt that the thought and actions of modern India are much coloured by the wave of nationalism which has swept over the world during the last half-century. The tendency to keep unbelievers away from Hindu shrines is very noticeable, as we were not granted access to any of the leading temples, although they were open to visitors a few years ago. Indian friends in Delhi told us that both militant Hinduism and militant Muslims have been caught up

in this wave of nationalism. Much of the ceremonial worship appears to be closely interwoven with this outburst of national feeling. The East is delighting in the revival of old customs, and stresses the ideal of independence from the West. In one old palace we were shown the picture of a Maharaja who fifty years ago adopted Victorian England's ceremonial dress; in those days Indian rulers were proud to adopt the customs of the British—not so to-day. Astute politicians, who wore Savile Row clothes twenty years ago, are now bowing before the inevitable, painting their brows with Hindu signs, wearing white dhotis, and going about barefoot.

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“Even in mid-winter in South India travelling is very trying, because of the temperature, which usually reaches 90 deg. or over during the day. On the journey from Madras to Bombay we were back again in dusty country, and every hour or two Hasani came into our compartment at the stations and flicked his duster about, though all he succeeded in doing was shifting clouds of dust from one corner to the other. We travel about with a large assortment of brown paper bags in which we put our books and the typewriter, when out of use (which is not often), clothes that we have gradually peeled off, and books, but despite our precautions dust finds its way in everywhere. Then there is always the insect problem, when looking out of the window becomes monotonous we are suddenly aroused by the appearance from under the seat of a couple of beetles, two inches long. My job is to try and slaughter the enemy and seize the corpses in toilet paper; there is also an endless fight with ants and mosquitoes. How we bless the individual who invented ‘Flit,’ for without it these journeys would really be intolerable. We flick it into every hidden corner and the whole place reeks of it.

“We think hopefully of the night, when for a short spell we can forget India's insect world and the ‘joys’ of travelling on this sub-continent. We resort to sedatives, but alas, the British pharmacopœia provides no antidote that will stand up to the noises of an Indian wayside station at night. Just as one is dropping to sleep the train stops, and as our wooden shutters are, of course, down, we cannot see the outside world; but all the noises you ever heard in the parrot house at the Zoo are as nothing in comparison. The train seems to stop every half-hour, and why the travelling public in India should vociferate to such an extent in the midnight hours passes comprehension. Likely as not, some frenzied would-be traveller hunting for a seat in the overcrowded train, rattles and bangs furiously at our door, which, thanks be, is barred from the inside. The assailant tires in the end, and his place is taken by someone else. How we thank our stars that democratic control of the railroads in India is not yet enforced, so that two first-class passengers are still entitled to a coupé to themselves at night. I am slightly shocked at these sentiments, perhaps, but the memory of our night journeys is still too poignant for me to take an unjaundiced view!”

## CHAPTER VI

### INDIAN POLITICAL MAZE

"TUNK, TONK, TONK, TONK, TONK" IS THE SOUND THAT SUMS UP INDIA FOR ME.

As I lay in St. George's Hospital, Bombay—my first ten days in India, in the April of 1939—while I wrestled with pneumonia—from morning to night I heard this monotonous note. I wondered and asked what it was. My kind Anglo-Indian nurses said it was a bird, but could not tell me its name. It sounded like the far-off hammering of a blacksmith on a melodious anvil, or almost like the distant clanging of the bell on an American locomotive. A few days later my doctor told me it was one of the best-known birds in India—the elusive coppersmith bird or crimson-breasted barbet.

My friend Tonk Tonk, as I am writing this chapter at the Hotel Cecil in Delhi five years later, is still busy. I have counted as many as 105 "tonks" running. I have heard him in every part of India from about mid-February, but I have never seen him. I have often gone to the tree in which he is hiding, but with his grass-green plumage he has a genius for camouflage. He is a small bird, entirely arboreal and apparently never descends to the ground.

Bombay is a very important political centre. Nowhere else could one get a better conspectus of the Indian political scene, for among its distinguished residents were Mr. Jinnah, President of the Muslim League, Mr. V. D. Savarkar, President of the Hindu Mahasabha; the militant Hindu organisation, and several other distinguished Hindu leaders, such as Mr. M. R. Jayakar, one of India's leading delegates at the Round Table Conference, Dr. K. M. Munshi, formerly an active member of Congress, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the leader of the Untouchables, members of the prosperous Parsi community, and wealthy Hindu industrialists, like Mr. Walchand Hirachand. Anyone who is attempting to put together the pieces of the India jigsaw can certainly study almost every phase of opinion in Bombay. I reserve the accounts of my interview with Mr. Jinnah for a separate chapter.

I never worked harder than in Bombay, and in the evenings used to return to the Taj Mahal Hotel suffering from mental nausea. I would go out to the select residential area of Malabar Hill and in houses not five minutes apart, would hear views diametrically opposed and uttered with equal fervour and conviction. On one side of the road I might be told that India would never consent to be divided, yet on the opposite side of the road I should probably be told that civil war was inevitable unless the duality of India was recognised. In the next road I might have to hear that if only Great Britain would withdraw, all would be well and India would compose its differences; 200 yards further on I was assured by one of the best-known politicians in India, that British withdrawal must inevitably be a disaster, and that India was not ready for complete independence as yet. If the British were to withdraw chaos would result, and India would go through all the turmoil of civil strife like China or Russia.

Even among the various communities, I would hear confusing and contrasted views. Within a short distance of Mr. Jinnah's residence I met a fiery Muslim who said that the Muslim League did not represent India. I heard Parsis, while proclaiming their great indebtedness to British rule, declare that one of the

greatest tragedies of India's recent political life had been Mr. Gandhi's use of his undoubtedly great understanding of mass psychology to pursue the negative policy of merely trying to inflame the country against the British. In the home of another wealthy Parsi I heard throughout one dreary meal nothing but abuse of Great Britain by our hostess. She seemed to delight in quoting extracts from the Tokyo radio, to which she was a regular listener. Those were the days, February, 1942, when British stock was at its lowest, and Indians who, two or three years earlier, had loudly proclaimed their loyalty to the Crown and had gladly accepted honours and high office from the British *raj*, now joined in the gleeful chorus of those who foretold the downfall of the Empire.

What was the use of "a blank cheque on a trashing bank?" Many wealthy Hindu industrialists, who were feathering their nests on an undreamt-of scale, by carrying out contracts for the British *raj*, were determined there should be no "scorched earth policy" in India. If the British *raj* was down and out, let it go. Now was the time for trimming sails with the future masters of Asia, the Japanese; for common sense dictated that one should try to keep a foot in both worlds.

"Bombay is tremendously full now" (my diary records), "as owing to the Japanese war many people are flocking to the western side of India. After the last six weeks in South India, where we have seen practically no British, it seems so extraordinary to be suddenly surrounded by white faces. We have a delightful bedroom in the Taj, facing north, with no direct sun—a great advantage, as it is fascinating to watch the big transports and the many warships. They are turning people away here by the hundred.

"It is very reassuring to see so many British soldiers and sailors, after the many damnable things which have been appearing in some of the Hindu-controlled newspapers. Of course, at Delhi we saw some soldiers, but nothing like this; the only two places in which we have found so warlike an atmosphere in the last sixteen months, were Savannah, Georgia, and Honolulu. Most of these reinforcements are presumably for Malaya. I got into conversation with a young American war correspondent, whose family I know. He gave me much interesting news about the East and the N.E.I. He had just been talking to some of the American aviators from Burma, and found them very confident about their ability to tackle the Japanese Air Force, which was good to hear. These fellows in the A.V.G. (American Volunteer Group) who have been defending the Burma Road, have had practically no losses. They have a poor opinion of the Japanese airmen as a whole. It was pleasant to talk to an American ally, the first we have met since America came into the war. He says that the Pearl Harbour coup, and the attack on H.M.S. *Prince of Wales* were largely planned by the Germans, and there are a number of German technicians in Japan. He was much impressed, as we were, by the preparations being made by the Dutch in the N.E.I. I think they took the lesson of the bombing of Rotterdam very much to heart, and the sinkings of Japanese ships by the small N.E.I. Navy are excellent.

"The young British officers passing through look like seasoned soldiers. There is only about one woman to every twenty men in this hotel. It is so unlike the deserted atmosphere of air-raid terrified Madras. . . . We were very much impressed by Winston's speech, and delighted to see that he got that wonderful vote of confidence, 466 to 1; it will do a lot of good in India here,

where they were inclined to think that he was losing his grip. We went round to the post office to get details of the new airgraph service in three days' time, between India and Great Britain. It will be a great boon, as our airmail and seamail letters are taking between three and four months to reach us."

I am anxious in these chapters on the Indian political scene not to puzzle my readers by bringing in too many names; I shall therefore merely mention talks with outstanding personalities. Two of the best-known Hindu residents in Bombay were Mr. Jayakar and Dr. Munshi. The Doctor, who was in the Congress Government while it was in power here for a couple of years, was one of the first Hindu leaders who, while not approving of Pakistan, admitted in my presence that the Muslims had a grievance, and had developed a scheme of his own for the realignment of provincial boundaries in British India. I wondered how many of the Congress leaders shared his views, seeing how the Congressmen for the most part had merely sought to annihilate Mr. Jinnah with invective; but here was a thoughtful Hindu realising the deep cleavage that existed, and that the only statesmanlike thing to do was to study the problem with an open mind.

I had an interesting talk with one of Dr. Munshi's daughters, a very intelligent person, the third Indian woman to become a solicitor. After the tea party, Dr. Munshi took me into his study for an hour's heart-to-heart talk; my wife went through a trying time listening to diatribes against Great Britain from Mrs. Munshi. There is a type of Indian woman whom we find it difficult to be patient with, completely unreasonable and seeming to think she can allow herself to say anything she likes against Great Britain. From subsequent accounts of the discussion I felt that my wife had acted with admirable tact, and while upholding our point of view, never said anything bitter against Indian politicians. When we got back to the Taj we read a detective story to change our thoughts; but I could not help wondering what two Indians would think if they were invited to a British home and their hostess spent most of her time saying unpleasant things about their country—especially when it was battling for its life. On various occasions we found the women much more unreasonable than the men, and this visit to the Munshis was a case in point, for I much enjoyed my own talk with our host and derived real value from it.

Mr. Jayakar lives in a delightful house on Malabar Hill and received us on the doorstep, dressed in Indian clothes, with his very attractive daughter, looking charming in her *sari*. He lived in England up to a year ago, practising at the Privy Council, and any country might be proud of so sane a leader. It was good to hear someone in Mr. Jayakar's position talking of the "glorious Round Table days." To judge by many of the references to recent British policy in India, the uninformed might have supposed there had been no Round Table. Certainly much of the American journalistic comment on India in 1942, when our recently joined ally to all intents and purposes "discovered India," was not only uninformed but inaccurate and without any background of fact.

I had seen Mr. Jayakar on a number of occasions in London during the Round Table discussions, and was anxious to get confirmation of my own memory of those anxious days when, at one moment, those of us who were working actively for a settlement, thought success was almost within our grasp. I asked Mr. Jayakar if he agreed that about nine-tenths of the points at issue had been solved, and whether, but for Mr. Gandhi's attitude, agreement would have

been reached. Mr. Jayakar strongly concurred and in referring to the part played by Mr. Gandhi during those critical days, used the words, "very unhelpful." Our talk covered a wide range of subjects. The Doctor thought one of the most important things that the Government of India could do, would be to appoint an Indian Defence Minister, as no Englishman would be able to rally the country. He was of the opinion that if the right Indian were appointed, forty or fifty thousand young men could be obtained as officers for the Indian Army. Mr. Jayakar was bitter about the Government's recent announcement that Australian officers were to be appointed to the Indian Army, which he regarded as "one of the worst blunders the British Government has committed"—Mr. Jayakar did not attach much credence to the rumours of Fifth Column activity on behalf of Japan, which I had heard in various quarters; he said that if India were declared free, and if Indians were put in charge of their defence and their finances, there would be a "tremendous response." Like so many of his fellow Hindus, he was bitterly opposed to Pakistan and thought Mr. Jinnah "largely overestimated his following."

During our talk on the subject of Hindu-Muslim relations, Mr. Jayakar told me that every decade the Hindus lose 5 per cent of their population to the Muslims who pursue a policy of proselytising. He said that Hinduism would have to protect itself in the future. This could be done by deciding that no conversions would be recognised unless they had been ratified before a magistrate, when a formal declaration of intention would have to be made.

My first meeting since Round Table days with Dr. Ambedkar, the leader of the Untouchables, was at his home at Dadar, a suburb of Bombay. "We had a half hour's drive through Bombay's native quarter, with its teeming life and tragic sights. In the middle of the highway at vantage points such as a tram terminus for collecting alms, were distorted cripples, legless or armless, placed there by their friends or employers. With true Eastern fatalism they ignored the vehicles swishing past them by a bare margin of inches. We saw every type of mis-shapen human form; one poor creature with withered limbs dragged himself along with a snake-like motion.

"Two fierce dogs on chains guarded Dr. Ambedkar's front door, when a lanky youth, dressed in a towel, pulled back one of the dogs, who was straining at the leash at our unwelcome presence, and whose jaw was uncomfortably near my leg. His collar was loose and looked as if it would slip over his head at any moment if the tension were relaxed. On the landing of the first floor a thick-set man of middle age, with shirt open at the neck, hobbled heartily forward to greet us, for Dr. Ambedkar was suffering from a strained ankle. Every spare inch was taken up by books, as both the Doctor's sitting-rooms were libraries, and never since coming to India had we seen a more interesting collection of biographies. Dr. Ambedkar started off by giving us the background of the Untouchables, showing how Untouchability is certainly India's most baffling problem."

The "Bhagavad Gita" itself places the outcast lower than a dog: "Sages look equally on a Brahmin adorned with learning and humility, a cow, an elephant and even a dog and an outcast."

Dr. Ambedkar is, of course, an Untouchable and proud of the fact; he likes to think of himself as the Moses of his people leading them out of the realm of Hindu bondage. His father and grandfather were officers in the British Army.

He got a scholarship at Columbia University, thanks to the late Gaekwar of Baroda, and subsequently got his Ph.D. at London University. He gave us a few elementary facts about the depressed classes, or "scheduled castes," as they are termed, and of the sufferings he endured as a youth. There are 50,000,000 Untouchables in British India and another 10,000,000 in the Indian States. When or how Untouchability started, he said, is shrouded in mystery. He claimed that the present status of his people is a terrible stigma on Hinduism; till recent times they were not permitted to attend schools patronised by Hindus, and even now they are made to sit apart. There has been some improvement in the status of the Untouchables in recent years; legally temple entry has been permitted them as in Travancore, but they are not allowed to own land, and their grievances are for the most part unredressed.

"The Hindus have economic, religious and social authority over our lives," the most tragic thing the high-caste Hindus have done to us," he said, "is to give us an inferiority complex. They have made us believe that we are untouchable, and that they control our destiny."

He then pointed out that there is no justice for Untouchables in the Courts of Law, as the judges are nearly always high-caste Hindus, which in practice means that in 99 per cent of cases the verdict goes against them, because "the word of an Untouchable is not taken as evidence."

Dr. Ambedkar considers that the British have a special responsibility towards his people, for the last battle against the Mahrattas in 1818, which resulted in establishing British rule in India, ended with the British victorious, and was fought by an army chiefly composed of Untouchables. In those days the British Army was largely recruited from the depressed classes, and in the town of Koregaon, 80 miles from Poona, can be seen a column, he said, "in memory of those who lost their lives in that campaign." Apart from the names of one or two British officers, all those whose sacrifice is recorded were Untouchables. "So," as he describes it, "India was finally conquered by us."

"The recruitment of Untouchables continued till 1892, when it was stopped because of agitation on the part of other sections of the community, and a promising avenue hitherto open was closed so far as careers are concerned. The position had become impossible as high-caste Hindus joined the British Army, and they refused to serve under Untouchable officers. He likened the case of the sufferers to that of the Negro or of the Jew, condemned to inferior status through no fault of their own. Dr. Ambedkar said, in conclusion, that the Untouchables are undoubtedly better off educationally to-day, thanks to the British Government, and to themselves; but they are still in the position of "economic slaves to the Hindu," and he declared that the Congress Party for the most part ignores the whole problem of Untouchability. He looks forward to the day when India will be a sister Dominion within the British Commonwealth, and thinks that the country as a whole is definitely anti-Japanese. He has closely studied the question of Pakistan, and has written a 400-page treatise on the problem which I am reading at the moment—a book in which he deals with the whole matter very fairly.

In fairness to Mr. Gandhi, I quote the account in my journal recording a visit to the Harijan settlement outside Delhi: "Probably nothing has done more, as far as the outside world is concerned, to draw attention to the plight of the Untouchables than the espousement of their cause by Mr. Gandhi, although the



leaders of the Depressed Classes say that this aid has been greatly exaggerated. A few miles outside Delhi is an institution financed by Mr. Gandhi's rich supporter, Mr. Birla, for training Untouchable youths in crafts and trades. The settlement consists of a number of neat brick houses, near a small marble rotunda, like a bandstand, open to the air on all sides, where the boys meet every morning for prayer at 5 o'clock. There is nothing in the house of prayer except a plinth, on the top of which was a brass vase with a plant in it. The sensible idea behind the institute is that every youth should be able to do something with his hands. In pursuit of this principle there are classes for bookbinding, weaving, carpentering and toy making, which we visited and found very interesting."

The biggest individual factor in India is the village; the future of the country, therefore, very largely depends on the extent to which the inhabitants of the 700,000 villages can be educated. This is the staggering problem facing social reformers. As far as one can see one village is very much like another. Outside the villages are settlements of mud-huts in which the wretched Untouchables eke out a bare existence. On the mud floor there will be found a little smouldering fire, consisting of cakes of cattle dung, the ordinary fuel. Tied to the charpoy will probably be a buffalo, sharing the hut with the family, and a few earthenware pots and pitchers lie about. Owing to frequent drought the inhabitants will probably be on the verge of starvation, for a family may depend for its entire living on the selling of milk of one buffalo cow.

In the dry weather, which lasts at least nine months, everything is deep in dust. When the Monsoon rains come the villagers live in a sea of mud, and many of their houses are washed away. The toll of malaria in the early autumn after the Monsoon is terrible as in nearly every village there is a pond with stagnant water. Probably in the course of time enlightenment will come through an organised system of oral instruction by means of wireless, as it has done in Soviet Russia and elsewhere; but the task of village uplift and especially the gradual leading of the Untouchable community out of their status of serfdom, will be a very slow and lengthy process.

One day a former acquaintance, Mr. Walchand Hirachand, the prominent Hindu industrialist, visited us in our bedroom at the Taj Hotel. Four years earlier we had crossed the Pacific on the same steamer with him when he was on his way to Japan, and on the eleven days we had many heated arguments. Mr. Hirachand has built up the largest Indian steamship organisation, which does a big coastal trade; he was also engaged in constructing a shipyard and had been largely instrumental in the establishment of the aircraft factory in Mysore. He was a very bitter critic of the Government of India's policy which, according to him, sought to retard the industrialisation of the country; he had chapter and verse for every statement that he made. In his view the financial magnates in Leadenhall Street had done their utmost to retain the trade of India in their hands, and on looking back at the commercial and industrial-history of India during the past fifty years, there seemed some justification for his remarks, for big business in every country naturally seeks to retain profitable markets for itself. Indian-owned business is likewise actuated by the profit motive.

One of the most arresting personalities we met was undoubtedly Mr. V. D. Savarkar, the oft re-elected President of the Hindu Mahasabha and leader of the pan-Hindu Movement. We had some difficulty in finding his two-storied house, standing in a little garden in the suburb of Dadar.

"We walked up an unkempt staircase, mysterious mortals looked out at us from behind doors; we were ushered into Mr. Savarkar's tiny bedroom, where we found him squatting on his bed. He wore large spectacles, was unshaven, with a stubbly grey growth, but looked younger than his fifty-eight years, which was surprising, considering the fact that he has spent twenty-eight years of his life in prison. He has a pleasant smile but one feels in him great forces of fanaticism. One of his followers was good enough to give me a copy of his biography. He was quite ready to talk about his stormy past.

"At the outset of his career, he had belonged to a world terrorist organisation, having studied the terrorist methods of Russian revolutionists in Paris as a young man. At the age of twenty-two, after many adventures he was arrested and condemned to death by the Courts in India; the death sentence was, however, quashed and he was condemned to two terms of penal servitude for life—the first term of fourteen years he served in the Penal Settlement on the Andaman Islands, in the Bay of Bengal; the second term he was allowed to serve on parole in a small Indian village. Savarkar was not an easy man to interview, because he got carried away by his theme and poured forth a torrent of words. Rather unfortunately I started him off on Pakistan, and once he got launched on the position of the Muslims in India, there was no holding him, and I had to bow before the storm.

"He has no sympathy for the Muslim League and does not mince words; the Muslims had got to accept Hindu domination; they lived in India and they must accept the position of minority. The mere mention of Jinnah was like a red rag to a bull. If the Muslims persist in their demands it must mean civil war. He claims that after the Congress Party the Mahasabha is the strongest political organisation in India. It was surprising to hear such a stormy petrel express his willingness to co-operate with Great Britain, but only if Great Britain, within the next couple of months,<sup>1</sup> declares an Indo-British Commonwealth; and the British Government must act quickly, for it is with Great Britain that he wishes to be linked up and not with the Dominions.

"He wants Hindi to become India's national language, in fact what he and his group are out for is a complete Hindu *raj*. He brushes the whole conception of Pakistan aside and says that the Five Rivers of Northern India are sacred to the Hindus; and if North-Western India were to be taken from Hindustan it would be the equivalent of asking the Muslims to give up Mecca. To demonstrate the need for urgent action he used the argument that if the Japanese were to land in India in the near future, and make a declaration recognising India as an independent nation, such action on their part would capture the imagination of political India, and it would be too late for any British concessions. He is a confirmed believer in democracy and his slogan for India is 'One man, one vote.' Anyone acquainted with the present condition of Indian villages, and the serfdom of the Untouchables, knows that such a proposition is quite outside the range of practical politics, and would be violently opposed by the Muslims, the Depressed Classes, and the Indian States." One could not meet Savarkar without being impressed by his deep sincerity and by the fact that the guiding star in his career has been devotion to his country's interests, as he sees them. He is to be classed in the category of national leaders who see one objective and are blind to all else."

<sup>1</sup> This was in February, 1942.

Every now and then our minds rebelled at the monotonous mental diet on which we were continuously fed. In order to preserve our balance we occasionally sought a complete change of thought and scene; and we gladly availed ourselves of the invitation to spend a morning on board the cruiser, H.M.S. *Dorsetshire*—the first British warship that we had visited since the outbreak of war. The *Dorsetshire* had had a stirring record since September, 1939, having steamed nearly 250,000 miles and having spent only three weeks in port in that period. From her officers and crew we heard a thrilling story of their engagements in the two hemispheres. They had been in at the death of *Bismarck*—pride of the Nazi Navy. Some of the young officers with whom I talked feared they were in for a pretty tough time, as the air cover provided for His Majesty's ships was quite inadequate.

When we heard of the *Dorsetshire's* loss a few months afterwards, we thought sadly of those fine young men.

## CHAPTER VII

### JINNAH MASTER MUSLIM

THERE COULD NOT BE A GREATER CONTRAST THAN BETWEEN MR. GANDHI AND Mr. Jinnah. I have had a number of talks with Qaid-E-Azam, to give the name by which he is known to his followers. I saw him before the Muslim League had reached its present powerful position and after the League controlled five of the Provincial Governments. I saw him just before the Cripps mission and immediately after it. I talked with him both at his house in Delhi and at Malabar Hill, Bombay, and he was the guest of honour at the last of my informal Press Parties, just before we left India.

He is a retired lawyer, thin, austere and ascetic. He speaks faultless English; his clothes look as if they were made in Savile Row. During our interviews I kept forgetting that he was a Muslim and I was an Englishman; I had the sensation of talking to a politician of vast experience. Mr. Jinnah certainly understands the British mind and knows England as few Indian leaders know it. He first went to England as a boy of sixteen, passed his "little go" in London and joined the Bar at Lincoln's Inn, spending five years there as a student. For many years when he was a successful lawyer, he used to visit Great Britain almost yearly, and practised for four years at the Privy Council, 1930-35.

Unlike Mr. Gandhi, Mr. Jinnah is reticent about his private life and eschews publicity. On one occasion I asked him whether he was happy during his first years in England. "During the first few months I found," he said, "a strange country and unfamiliar surroundings. I did not know a soul, and the fogs and winter in London upset me a great deal, but I soon settled down and was quite happy." But even to this day he has not overcome his dislike of London fogs! Mr. Jinnah has been deeply influenced by English literature; his favourite poets are Shakespeare, Shelley and Milton; and he has closely studied the speeches of British statesmen. The statesman for whom he has the greatest admiration is the elder Pitt.

I also asked the Muslim leader for some details as to his career in India, and when a boy what were his chief ambitions? He told me that on one occasion he went to the Law Courts with his father and saw a barrister with gown and

bands, and inquired who this person was. On being told he was a barrister, he immediately said: "I want to be a barrister," and did become one—and a very distinguished advocate—so that boyhood ambition came true. His interest in politics began when he was studying in London at the age of seventeen and he spent much of his spare time in the British Museum.

The public man who exercised the greatest influence on his thinking was the Parsi Dadabhoi Naoroji, President of the Indian Congress in 1886, 1893 and 1906, and a firm believer in the British sense of justice. He also sat in the British House of Commons.

I asked Mr. Jinnah when he first got the vision of Pakistan and he told me it was in 1930. Another question I put to him was whether he thought the emancipation of women in India would continue to develop rapidly? His reply was "Yes; Islam stands for the equality of women. There is abundant proof in history in that direction."

A final question was about his chief recreation and how did he forget his office worries, to which he replied: "My profession is such that it never allows me time for recreation, and I hardly have any."

Our first meeting, apart from casual encounters at the time of the Round Table Conferences in London, was in the study of his Delhi house. The impression that I brought away from that first interview was very favourable; here was a man who would be amenable to reason, once fundamentals were decided upon. He had by no means the one-track mind of a De Valera. I had never before fully understood the standpoint of the Muslims and in our first talk he made me see that they had a strong case, which was very little understood, either in Great Britain or in America. He summed up his creed in a few forceful words. "There is no such thing as an Indian nation. India is a constellation of nations, and the two major nations are the Hindus and the Mussulmans. There is no more an Indian nation than there is a European nation."

Owing to extremely clever Congress propaganda superficial observers who read the English-language Press in India, might not realise that 90 per cent of the newspapers are Hindu-owned; what they were getting was not the voice of India, or of the several Indias, but largely that of the Congress Party and Hindu "big business."

The object of this first talk was, in Mr. Jinnah's words: "To make you understand the background of the demand of Muslim India for Pakistan." Clever pleader that he is, the President of the Muslim League certainly succeeded in making me realise what it was that Muslim India was demanding. Was it reasonable to regard a national group of nearly a hundred millions—considerably more than the total population of Great Britain, Canada, Australia, the Union of South Africa, Southern Rhodesia, New Zealand, and Newfoundland—with a highly developed culture of its own, as a subordinate group? There were, of course, many Muslims who did not agree with the programme of the Muslim League. There was also a small group of Muslims within the ranks of the Congress Party, but there was no doubt that Mr. Jinnah spoke for the great Muslim majority.

The greatest mistake the Congress Party was making was its pretence to represent India as a whole. From the Muslim standpoint the Government of India's scheme of Federation, outlined in the Act of 1935, was as dead as the dodo. Muslim India would not be satisfied unless the whole constitutional plan was

considered *de novo*. As an Ulsterman, I was, perhaps, able to appreciate the Muslim point of view without difficulty, for I was firmly convinced that there would never have been peace in Ireland, if Ulster's claim for self-determination had not been recognised.

Mr. Jinnah is very much of a realist, and he made no bones about the complete lack of unity in India. "In trying to make all India into one Dominion you are attempting the impossible. We have no ill-will against the Hindus, but they differ fundamentally from us; our way of life, our laws and our jurisprudence, differ completely; the Germans, in fact, have more in common with the British than have the Mussulmans with the Hindus. The whole conception of our religion is brotherhood. We cannot understand the Hindu caste system; when I am at the Mosque on Fridays my chauffeur kneels beside me, and at the end of the service we embrace one another as brothers."

I discussed with the Muslim leader the suggested splitting up of India into five zones, each zone to be a large autonomous State. I was interested to learn that he did not regard existing Indian provincial frontiers as sacrosanct; they had been drawn up arbitrarily. Under the five-zone schemes there would be two Muslim States in North-West India with a Muslim majority of 65 per cent and North-East India with a Muslim majority of over 55 per cent, so that these two Muslim-controlled States would hold sway over less than a quarter of the total population of India. The three remaining zones would control the rest of India, apart from the Indian States. The Hindus would control these three States, and would therefore have the largest population of any country in the world, excluding China, with which they should certainly be satisfied.

I asked Mr. Jinnah for his comments on the statement made to me by Hindu friends, that Pakistan would seek to enter into a confederation with other Muslim States in the Middle East and North Africa, on the basis of Pan-Islam. I gathered that he had no such object in mind, and while he hoped relations between the Muslim countries in Asia and North Africa would be intimate and friendly, Pakistan would be quite ready to remain a partner State within the British Commonwealth, on a basis of complete equality with Great Britain and the Dominions. On various occasions we discussed the likelihood, after the war, of the British Commonwealth itself being enlarged by the addition of other like-minded States, as a half-way house on the road to ultimate world unity.

From talks with other Muslim leaders I certainly gained the impression that the time factor was important, and that if Great Britain were to meet the friendly advances of Muslim India, in the spirit in which they were made, and would agree to the creation of an autonomous Muslim India, she would have a strong and faithful ally in a key position in Asia.

Once Great Britain recognised the fundamental justice of the Muslim claim, the new State would be willing to discuss such common problems as defence, foreign policy, and economics with Great Britain and the other members of the Commonwealth. He illustrated Muslim tolerance, in contrast to Hindu exclusiveness, by drawing attention to the fact that no Hindu household employs Muslims as servants; this is especially true of the large Hindu business houses. He remarked: "We Mussulmans, however, do employ Hindus, in my Bombay house I employ five Hindus, three Muslims and one Christian." He also drew my attention to the fact that in no way have the Muslims impeded the British war effort, and that Muslim India had contributed half the forces to the Indian

Army. "If Parliament meets the Muslim point of view, Muslim India will give the utmost co-operation to the prosecution of the war, for we both believe in the same things; we are just as anxious to fight against Japanese domination as you are."

He explained that the word Pakistan was coined in this way: P. for Punjab; A for the North-West Frontier Province, and the areas round it, which are not strictly British, known as Afghanistan; K for Kashmir; S for Sind; and Tan for Baluchistan. He said: "Referring to the Hindu demand that India should be treated as a single unit, and that the constitution should be on the basis of United India, with a Central Government vested with all-India powers, the fundamental point is, that under any democratic or popular system of government, the result would be a permanent Hindu majority at the centre, of at least 75 per cent Hindus as against 25 per cent Mussulmans. Hindus and Muslims are not only different—they are antagonistic. In fact, the differences are far greater than those that have led to the constituting of different nations in Europe or in America. . . . All-India, constituted as a single unit, is more of an impossibility than it would be to have one Central Government for the Americas, or for the whole of Europe. The present unity of India is British-made and is upheld by the British bayonet, and a bureaucratic system of government."

In February, 1942, when I talked with Mr. Jinnah in Bombay I was better equipped to listen to his views than I had been at our first meeting in Delhi. I was particularly anxious to bring my knowledge of the Muslim case up-to-date, because we were going straight from Bombay for a second visit to Mr. Gandhi at his Ashram. I was convinced that the Muslim League was growing in strength and that many of its Hindu opponents realised that fact. On this occasion the Muslim leader did not bother to deal with the past history of the Pakistan Movement, but stated very forcibly that after a lifelong study of political conditions he had definitely come to the conclusion that there must be two Indias. He was convinced that once the Muslims were running their own country as a result of a friendly settlement with the Hindus, there was much greater likelihood of the autonomous States coming closer together, just as had the original thirteen British Colonies in North America.

Mr. Jinnah had to step warily as his political opponents were waiting for him to make a false move. For that reason I did not expect him to give me a statement for publication that he had no desire to break the British connection, but from the many talks I had with leading Muslims, I was convinced that if the British Government would recognise the Muslim right to be considered as an equal partner with the other States in the British Commonwealth, they would certainly consent. Apart from the political situation Mr. Jinnah was giving much thought to the question of Hindu-Muslim relations. While I did not ask him to commit himself, I told him that I proposed to suggest the desirability at this critical time of a meeting between him and Mr. Gandhi, to discuss, not political relations, but merely Hindu-Muslim relations in general, so as to arrive at a *modus vivendi*. I believe Mr. Jinnah thought there was little likelihood of a successful outcome of my endeavours.

In the ten weeks since our last meeting Mr. Jinnah had become, if anything, more confident as to the strength of the Muslim position, and despite his critics he maintained that the League represented 90 per cent of the Muslim population, and if the Hindus did not believe that he spoke for Muslim India, he was quite

ready to rely on a referendum. Much of the current discussion in the foreign Press about the Indian political situation was, in his view, therefore entirely beside the point. Especially when it was proposed that Great Britain should hand over to India control of its own affairs after the war, such a declaration would be tantamount to placing the Muslims permanently under the control of the Hindu majority—a development which Muslim India would never accept. He was more than ever convinced that there was no alternative but to establish the two large zones in North-West and North-East India, with their permanent Muslim majority as Dominions. For several years after the conclusion of the war, foreign policy, defence, and economics would be “reserved subjects” for consultation with the other free partner States in the British Commonwealth, and it certainly appeared that for a long time, both the United States and the British Commonwealth would have to work together and pool their defence and foreign policies. He was of the opinion that any unofficial conference of leading Indians attempting to hammer out a political constitution, as suggested by Sir Mirza Ismail, would be merely wasting time, until the question had been decided whether Muslim India was to control its own destiny in India, as Ulster does in Ireland.

I had further talks with Mr. Jinnah early in 1944. Despite the strain of the past two years his mind was even more alert, and he conveyed a feeling of complete confidence in the increasing acceptance of the Pakistan idea. When I first talked to him, in December, 1941, although by-elections were running in favour of the Muslim League, at that moment there was not a single Muslim League Government functioning in any of the Provinces.

In 1944, when I talked to Mr. Jinnah—for five of the Provincial Governments were then in the hands of supporters of the Muslim League—he might well have said: “I told you so”—but he didn’t. The Muslim leader kept repeating, “Pakistan is already accepted. Even if the details have not yet been worked out, and whatever may be said to the contrary, many Hindus realise this.” Mr. Jinnah thinks that the one certain way to bring about civil strife would be to persist in upholding the myth of Indian unity. The way to prevent civil strife is to recognise Hindustan and Pakistan, and once these two States are in control of their local affairs, it will be incumbent upon them to consult with one another and with the Indian States, as to how the various Indias are to work in amity.

Mr. Jinnah thinks the British Commonwealth has a great opportunity of showing to the world its realism and giving proof of its *bona fides*. He thinks it would be a wise step if the British Government made a declaration on the following lines:

“His Majesty’s Government has been attempting to solve the difficult problem of India’s political future for two decades without success. Since the beginning of the present war, we have hoped against hope that there might be a Hindu-Muslim settlement. The honesty of our intentions was demonstrated to the world in the Cripps Proposals. After continuous endeavour to find a way out, we see no hope of reaching agreement. This unsatisfactory situation cannot be permitted to continue indefinitely.

“In view of our solemn declaration and of our determination to transfer the government of India to the Peoples of India, we have come to the conclusion that the only permanent solution of the Indian problem is to grant

Dominion status forthwith to Hindu India and to Muslim India, and to see this solution through.

"The details of the exact frontiers between Hindu and Muslim India will have to be worked out by six delegates appointed by Hindu India, and in the case of the Muslims, by six delegates appointed by the Muslim League. There will be a British chairman. Without going into the details of the various frontiers of the proposed Pakistan, we suggest that the two Muslim States, to be established, should consist of that portion of North-West India, which contains not less than 65 per cent population of Muslims and that portion of North-East India which contains not less than 55 per cent of Muslims."

Mr. Jinnah is firmly convinced that an increasing number of Hindus realise that in a world in flux, the desire of the Muslims in India to establish the largest Muslim State in the world, which is what Pakistan would be, is an eminently reasonable one. In the post-war era many difficult racial questions will have to be solved, and there can surely be little doubt that a satisfied Muslim State in North-West India, having special ties of friendship with Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Arabia, would be a great stabilising factor. Mr. Jinnah is sure that a satisfied Pakistan would be a loyal and permanent ally of Great Britain in South Central Asia, because there is a great community of interests between the British Commonwealth and Pakistan. Once Muslim aspirations were satisfied, Muslim India would desire nothing better than to reach a friendly working agreement with Hindustan.

When peace comes, vast and intricate problems will present themselves; not least among them will be that of guaranteeing security to the nations with territories on the Arabian Sea and on the Bay of Bengal. There will have to be some form of regional pact among the countries facing the Indian Ocean, from Singapore to Aden. In working out problems of defence against possible aggressors, Muslim India, Hindu India, and the sister-nations of the British Commonwealth could all play a leading role in preserving peace in Asia.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE ASHRAM AGAIN

WE LEFT BOMBAY FOR WARDHA BY THE CALCUTTA EXPRESS AND TRAVELLED FOR the first time in India in a really modern railway compartment, all steel, air-conditioned, and clean. We arrived back at Wardha just nine weeks after our former visit. The first thing that greeted our astonished eyes as we steamed into the station, was the Exhibition Train of the Government of India Defence Department, on tour throughout the country. In an adjoining field was a military camp, and a Union Jack was just being hoisted—an unexpected sight in the sacred city of Congress. On this occasion the Governor of the Central Provinces had asked the Deputy Chief of the Police to meet us, and had sent his car from Nagpur, fifty miles away, to take us to the Ashram. As the Governor's driver did not know the way there, a policeman sat on the box for the first three miles to direct him. I was rather relieved when the policeman got down three miles from Sevagram, as our arrival under police protection might have caused fluttering in the Ashram dovecot. We got there at 8.30,



earlier than we had been expected, and from the road saw Gandhiji walking across the field, staff in hand, escorted by twenty of his followers, old and young and of both sexes.

Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur, his personal secretary, showed us into an empty mud-floored hut, the windows had no panes of glass, but bars; there was no furniture in the room on our arrival, but in a few minutes various individuals arrived, including a fine old white-bearded man, who produced a wooden bedstead with strips of canvas across it; on this we placed our belongings. The only two wicker stools of the establishment, on which we had sat two months before, were placed on a piece of matting. We were not offered any breakfast, but as we had had nothing we were relieved to hear the midday meal was at 11 o'clock. There were no washing facilities, but after a short delay a brass mug with hot water was produced, and with the assistance of a small looking-glass, kindly lent to me by Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur, I was able to shave. My wife fared better as Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur took her to the Mahatma's private washing-room in his hut, which she was much interested to see.

We were left in peace for several hours so were able to catch up with our journal from which I now quote: "Just after we had started to work we heard voices outside our hut, and looked out through the barred window and saw Gandhiji returning from his morning walk surrounded by his flock, his hands resting on the shoulders of two of his followers, young maidens with long plaits. The procession, which was headed by an emaciated cat, stopped at the doorway of his hut and his disciples stood round reverently while he gave a short exhortation before the day's work. He then disappeared behind the sun curtain.

"We went for half-an-hour's stroll later on in the morning to look at Sevagram Village, a quarter of a mile away, primitive but picturesque. Lovely emerald bee-catchers flitted in the morning sunshine, and even by 9 a.m. the sun was relentlessly hot. Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur told us that during April, May and June, the temperature inside the huts frequently goes up to 114 deg. and the inmates have to seek relief by putting cold compresses on their heads." (Later.) "Everybody at the Ashram, from Gandhiji to the humblest sweeper, and of course the guests, partake of lunch together squatting on the concrete floor of the verandah. Our two little straw stools were brought for us, and wooden stools placed in front of us on which our pewter platters were placed. We were a party of thirty-six. On my left was Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur, on my right H., who sat next but one to Gandhiji, an old woman sitting between.

"We much enjoyed the vegetarian fare of the Ashram with which we were entirely at home as it was on Nature Cure principles. We only wish that while travelling in India generally we could have such excellent meals—delicious salads, brown bread and butter, curds and whey. Gandhiji's vitality is certainly a very good testimony to his sensible diet. The old lady sitting next to H. had a dish of steamed cabbage which, although there was a spoon on her platter, she ate with her fingers in Indian fashion. From time to time she waved her hand over Gandhiji to keep the flies away from him, and finally told a small girl to keep on fanning him. When she leant over and with a spoon took a mouthful out of a little dish he was eating, it dawned on H. that her neighbour must be Mrs. Gandhi, which proved to be the case. H. had been able to study her surroundings at leisure, but I was involved in a somewhat acrimonious political discussion with Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur. I very much disliked the latter's attitude to the

treacherous Japanese attack at Pearl Harbour at the very moment when the American Government was carrying on 'friendly discussions' with the Japanese Representatives at Washington. Her comment was: 'All is fair in love and war.' My reply was that there was no question of war at that time; it was a dastardly attack on an unsuspecting nation at peace with Japan. She then changed her ground and declared the Japanese action was no worse than what the British do, and referred specifically to the recent occupation of Iran.

"It seemed to me incredible that someone so close to Gandhiji should hold such views. I was convinced that she would never have spoken like this if she was not expressing the opinions of her master. Some days later Madame Chiang Kai Shek described to a gathering of Indian women in Delhi the horrors of the Japanese butchery at Nanking. I sent a newspaper cutting of this speech by one of the leading women in Asia on Japanese conduct to Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur, and asked her if she still maintained the views she had so forcibly expressed to me at the lunch at the Ashram. In due course I got an acknowledgment from her in the form of a postcard, on which I am glad to say she did admit anyway that 'there are degrees,' by which I assume she meant degrees of frightfulness.

"At the beginning of the meal Gandhiji intoned a prayer with his followers, but he remained silent most of the time. We were waited on by a Muslim woman, a male Untouchable and a Hindu; the two latter wore nothing but loin-cloths. Immediately after luncheon we went into Gandhiji's room for an hour-and-a-half's talk, this time by ourselves, as I had particularly asked that we might have a heart-to-heart talk. The only other person present was Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur, though later in the discussion two Congressmen came in."

Returning to Wardha involved us in considerable additional travelling, but we did so for two reasons—because I had promised Gandhiji in accordance with his very cordial invitation, and secondly, because I wanted to ascertain from him whether he would be ready to meet Mr. Jinnah and five leading members of the Muslim League, he to be accompanied by five prominent Hindus, to discuss Hindu-Muslim relations and nothing else. The Mahatma was difficult to pin down; he said that at any time he would be ready to meet Jinnah Sahib for a talk, but he would go as himself, and not as representing anyone; his case is that Congress has never been a Hindu organisation (though of course it is largely so to-day). I could not get him to take the problem seriously, perhaps he resented my intrusion in the field of Hindu-Muslim relations. Finally, in bantering vein he told Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur to write down on a piece of paper the names of the friends whom he would be prepared to take with him for a talk with Mr. Jinnah. I have still the list in Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur's writing, which runs as follows:

Gandhiji and his wife, Pyarelal, Sir Evelyn and Lady Wrench, Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur, Dr. Mukerjee (Christian), Dr. S. K. Datta (Christian) and Rajagopalachari (Rajaji).

At the conclusion of our second talk with Gandhiji we both felt a sense of frustration. We sensed a different atmosphere and we could only suppose that some of my remarks as to the disunity of India, when in Bombay, must have been repeated to him, and that he did not approve of my statement that there would not be peace in India unless the Muslim claim was recognised. After the cordial relations which had existed ever since our first meeting at the time of the Round Table Conference, I think he may have hoped that I would have supported the

claims of Congress. Not only had Mr. Gandhi pressed us to come back after our visit to South India, when we were at Sevagram in December, but I had received a letter from Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur, from Bardoli, in which she had said: "Gandhiji wishes me to say that, if in any way possible for you, he will be very glad to see you on your return journey."

On this second occasion I felt we never met the real Gandhi; there was an invisible veil between us, except on one occasion, when we were discussing Hindu-Muslim relations, and I said: "If I were a dictator and wished for the ultimate unity of India I would meet the Muslims half-way and do away with their sense of grievance, however unreasonable it may seem to you." I understood him to say that he shared those views, anyhow at that particular moment. His meeting with Mr. Jinnah in the second half of 1944 seems to bear this out.

My final impression of Gandhi, after the second visit, was that he certainly is not the great man that I believed him to be at the time of my first meeting with him during the Round Table Conference. Perhaps the most charitable point of view is to admit that only a saint could have stood up to the adulation which, for a quarter of a century, he has received from Hindu India. I have frequently thought of the words of a prominent Hindu, a lifelong friend of the Mahatma's, and formerly his devoted disciple. He told me that for many years he had thought that Gandhi was destined to become "the light of India," by reason of his deeply spiritual outlook on life. Almost with tears in his eyes, he added that he could never express the depth of his sorrow when by degrees he realised that Gandhi, the Mahatma, had become Gandhi, the astute political leader.

We left the Ashram for Nagpur in clouds of dust. We passed an endless procession of ox-carts laden with maize, looking golden in the blazing afternoon sun. Government House, Nagpur, and its hill-top garden seemed very green and we revelled in hot baths.

## CHAPTER IX

### BAFFLING BENARES

THE FLESH-POTS OF EGYPT MAY BE CONTEMPTIBLE BUT THEY ARE VERY PLEASANT, as we thought when an attendant in red tunic brought us an appetising breakfast, daintily set out in our room at Government House, Nagpur. Sir Henry and Lady Twynam were very considerate hosts, and it was comforting being under their roof, at a moment when it looked as if only a miracle could save the British Empire from a major disaster in Malaya. Six months before, their only son had been lost in a submarine, their eldest daughter's husband was in the Signals at Singapore, and the whole family was tensely waiting for every news bulletin. The daughter had a small baby of only eleven months which had never seen its father, and she herself had been on the verge of setting off to join her husband at Singapore for a short holiday the week before. All her luggage was packed when, on the day she was leaving, she received a cable from her husband telling her not to come. The only other guests were Sir S. Radhakrishnan, Vice-Chancellor of Benares University—a man with a fine intellect and subtle ideas—

and Sir Colin Garbett, amazingly vital after long years of service with the I.C.S. and deeply interested in India's problems.

Life in India is full of contrasts. Exactly twenty-four hours after our talk with the prince of passive resisters, we were visiting the Defence Department's Exhibition Train, the object of which was to stimulate interest in the war effort. The train was in charge of a major in the Gurkhas and was an extremely well-arranged exhibit; most of the Members of the train were veterans of the campaigns in Abyssinia and the Middle East. There was an admirable contour map of the Fortress of Keren, and that amazing British-Indian victory was described in modest terms by one of the Indian heroes who took part in the fighting. There was also a great show on the parade ground where the Governor inspected armoured transport of every kind, and military and naval units. An aeroplane gave a demonstration of dive-bombing before a crowd of 30,000 Indian spectators, many of whom had probably never witnessed aircraft stunts before. A band of Indian soldiers, in red tunics and dark blue trousers, played bagpipes with almost Scottish efficiency.

At the early celebration at the Nagpur Anglican Cathedral there was a good congregation of Indians and Anglo-Indians, but alas, only a handful of British. In many talks with Indian friends, they often said to us that as far as they could see, the British were no longer a Christian people. "We admire" (they said) "the precepts of the Founder of Christianity but they do not seem to exercise much influence on the lives of many of the British who live amongst us." The indifference to religion among the great majority of the British living in India is a sad fact, and is constantly commented on in my journal: "A wave of indifference seems to have swept over large numbers of the British community, official, military and civilian; and orthodox Hindus and Muslims who are strict in their observances assume that the West has thrown Christianity to the winds. It is very tragic."

While at Nagpur I discussed with Sir Maneckji and Lady Dadabhoy a very unfortunate racial incident which had just taken place. An ill-mannered Englishman had refused to permit an Indian to enter his railway carriage. Although the Englishman in question was not in the Army, being merely a recruit seeking to join up, the General Commanding sent a letter of apology. Indians are naturally, and rightly, touchy on this question of colour prejudice, and we heard of other incidents. It is sad to think that the bitterness of several Indian leaders towards the British has been engendered in the past by just such cases of ill-mannered behaviour on the part of our countrymen, who seem to forget that the Indian sub-continent is not their personal property!

The question of colour prejudice is one which I have tried to fight against all my life, and in the columns of the *Spectator* I attempted to bring about a change of heart on the part of hotel and boarding-house proprietors in London, who, with their American patrons in mind, exclude His Majesty's coloured subjects from Asia, Africa, and British Colonial possessions in the West Indies. In fairness to the British authorities in India, however, I found that everyone I spoke to was very indignant when such episodes were brought to their attention. There was, too, another side to the matter; in Nagpur I learned of the case of two English girls who used to bicycle to their work; a young Congressman had the habit of deliberately riding them down, and I was told of other unpleasant incidents

when the families of British officials had experienced similar indignities, especially in so eruptive a province as Bengal.

"After dinner we listen to the direct broadcasts from Rangoon; the news from the Netherlands East Indies, Singapore and Libya is continuously bad. The only good news that we heard was of the arrival of the Generalissimo and Madame Chiang Kai Shek in Delhi, which we hope will have a salutary effect on Indian opinion, and may off-set some of the Japanese fifth-column work of which we are constantly hearing. Many prominent Indians, unwittingly perhaps, were lending themselves to the propaganda work of the Japanese, and are more frequent listeners to Tokyo than to London! We were told on good authority that the Japanese priest whom we had seen at the Ashram on 7th December, had since been rounded up as a spy. When we saw him I had felt suspicious as to his presence and had wondered what were his subterranean machinations.

"During our stay at Government House a very nice Indian lieutenant in the Royal Indian Navy came to dine; he was unostentatious and efficient. It was only after his departure that we learnt of his terrible experiences. The vessel of which he was in charge was sunk within a minute and a half in the Red Sea, almost instantaneously he found himself standing up to his waist in water, on the bridge. He was sucked down when the vessel foundered, but managed to come up to the surface, being a good swimmer, and struck away from the wreckage; although he was four hours in the water, he was finally picked up, but several of his shipmates were devoured by sharks."

We had an unpleasant journey to Benares as we had to make a cross-connection and to endure the disagreeable experience of waiting several hours for the Calcutta Express on a wayside railway platform. Let me quote from my diary: "We are waiting for the Calcutta Express; only those who know what Indian platforms in war-time are can picture the ordeal. A coolie had produced two wicker chairs; as there is no general waiting-room the sexes are segregated. H. gallantly typing the journal to my dictation. On the platform we are surrounded by patient humanity of every variety, lying, squatting, eating, chewing betel nut, and the rest of it. Veiled Muslim women sit sphinx-like around us, unveiled peasant women, their ankles covered with silver bangles, their toes adorned with rings, small children with large gold rings hanging from their nostrils, some wild-looking men with two gold ear-rings in each ear, one in the lobe and the other in the top of the ear; there are also railway policemen, Sepoys, a handful of British officers and their womenfolk. On the rails hungry dogs, their ribs protruding, are searching for food. . . . Our train was four hours late; fortunately we had booked places in the air-conditioned coach and found ourselves back in a clean compartment, kept at the even temperature of 72 deg. with double windows and no dust, and practically all external noises excluded—a great luxury after the babel of the last few hours.

"Moghal Sarai, on the main line to Calcutta, is ten miles from Benares. We arrived there an hour after midnight. Out of the station darkness emerged a tall and refined-looking man, the guide who had been sent from our hotel to meet us. I shall never forget that mysterious drive along the highway under the star-splashed heavens, to the great religious centre of Hinduism—Holy Kashi, the popular name for Benares. According to Hindu belief those fortunate enough to die there will be exempt from the penalty of re-birth. During the whole drive we kept passing bullock carts—unlighted, of course, though as a matter

of fact, when they were approaching we could see them from a distance, because suddenly, out of the dark, loomed four bright points like giant cats' eyes—the eyes of the bullocks lit up by our headlights."

At frequent intervals on the roadside, bullock teams were unyoked for the night, and round the shadowy vehicles gleamed the eyes of those bullocks resting on the ground. Two miles from our destination we crossed the Ganges by the pontoon bridge; it was a dramatic entry into sleeping Benares. We drove through quiet streets, cattle and goats lay on the road, and human beings were strewn along the pavement, wrapped in rugs, for Indians when they sleep out-of-doors cover their heads entirely with their wraps, presumably as a guard against mosquitoes. On arrival at the hotel our guide optimistically stated there were no mosquitoes at this time of the year: a few minutes later, on our opening the cupboard in our bedroom, a cloud of mosquitoes surged out; nowhere have I killed so many in one night.

Our hotel was two miles from the centre of the town; just opposite it was the Anglican Church of St. Mary the Virgin, an attractive eighteenth-century building, with tapering steeple and white colonnade, a relic of the old British India which is rapidly vanishing. It was situated in a two-acre enclosure where an elaborate system of irrigation had been installed, the water being carried through open brick-lined channels. There was an English atmosphere in the garden, where roses, pansies and sweet-peas made fragrant the morning air. While we breakfasted, the Allahabad paper of 11th February was brought to us, containing evil tidings from Singapore, the Netherlands East Indies, and Libya.

Apart from three British soldiers and an elderly Englishwoman, we had the hotel to ourselves. The local snake-charmer, with his bagful of snakes and a mongoose on a leash, wanted to stage the disgusting sight of a battle between snake and mongoose. However much we might rejoice in the death of one more Indian snake, we did not wish to see it staged for our benefit. Shortly afterwards another individual appeared with a harassed-looking bear and some monkeys—the dependents on tourist traffic were having a hard time, poor devils.

On our way into Benares we passed the house in which Warren Hastings lived, and saw the sundial he erected in 1784. We were also shown the College started by Annie Besant, the house in which she used to live, the Ashram where Gandhi stays and the Congress Headquarters flying the Congress flag. The guide-books state that for countless centuries Hindus have been persuaded that no harm can come to them from the water of their hallowed river which they believe to possess miraculous properties. Colonel H. A. Newell writes: "Curiously enough modern science has in part established the truth of their ancient superstition, and extensive tests have revealed the presence of a powerful antiseptic of some kind. This is said to nullify the most virulent cholera germ and to kill it outright within six hours."<sup>1</sup>

East is East and West is West, and I am quite ready to admit that there may be something lacking in my composition, but this is the impression that Benares made on us as recorded in my journal: "Benares is very much what we expected, never a white face, seething humanity, dirt and smells inconceivable and beggars at every corner. We went first to the Durga or Monkey Temple (Durga is another name for Kali who is the wife of Shiva the Destroyer, the presiding deity of Benares). H.'s study of Romain Rolland's *Life of Ramakrishna* has made

<sup>1</sup> Benares—*The Holy City of the Hindus*, by Lt.-Col. H. A. Newell.

her familiar with Kali worship. In the inner recesses of the temple the idol of Kali, with tongue out, was garlanded with flowers; the story is that once in a frenzy she slew a mass of people and in her madness danced on the prostrate body of Shiva and, recognising it, put out her tongue, consequently her idols always show her with outstretched tongue."

"We climbed up narrow stairs to a roof-top surrounding the temple, escorted by an attendant priest clad in a bath-towel, who carried a bowl of dried peas, a food popular with the monkeys; he shouted "Ha Ha" and monkeys came clambering down from the trees and swarmed along the roof-top. They were by no means friendly—perhaps they regarded us as infidels! After snatching the food from our hands they snarled and jabbered at us. A big bell summoned the devout to their prayers, and people wandered in and out. Every Tuesday a goat is sacrificed to Shiva; we saw the wooden cross-piece on which the animal's head rests before being struck off at a blow. The goat is the perquisite of the priest, as was the case in Israel of old. On great feast days buffaloes are offered up.

"We jostled our way through a never-ending stream of bullock carts, camels, and crowds of pilgrims, to the Golden Temple, the holiest place in Benares, so called from its golden roof. We walked through narrow streets only a few feet across, and were permitted to look down upon the sacred Well of Knowledge. In the forecourt were pilgrims, squatting and pouring holy water over themselves under the shadow of a pipal tree; the ground was covered with cattle dung, and sacred cattle appeared in the most unexpected places. A man with a large goitrous growth on his neck was selling flower-blossoms for scattering around the shrine.

"In an alcove a Bhairagi naked save for a diminutive loincloth, smeared over with grey ash, his hair matted and unkempt and dyed orange, was reclining in a semi-trance. As we came out we were assailed by an army of beggars, indescribable smells from hot humanity, cattle, and the dirt of ages were wafted to us. Our guide had literally to fight his way to our taxi. There was one particularly harrowing sight—a paralysed beggar who lay in the middle of the street; he projected himself by turning his neck and levering himself round; why he was not run over was a mystery. On the way we nearly ran over humans, dogs, goats or bumped into buffaloes, bicycles, rickshaws and bullock carts. Never in my life have I so realised the supreme value of the principle that cleanliness is next to godliness. Benares is dirtier than any place I have ever seen.

"On our second morning we set off at 7 o'clock to visit the "burning-ghâts," where the bodies of the faithful are consumed by fire. We went in a large punt with a platform on it, almost like a small houseboat on the Thames, which made it possible to inspect riverside Benares at a comfortable distance. H. and I agreed that it was one of the most interesting mornings that we had ever spent; but the experience is not one that we should like to repeat. Our car deposited us at the edge of the steep slope which descends to the waterside; we went down endless stone steps, passing multitudes of pilgrims and local Hindus on their way to bathe in Mother Ganges. On little wooden erections built out over the river, were all types of Hindus, bathing, washing their clothes, washing their teeth, pouring Ganges water out of brass pots over their bodies, and rinsing their mouths with it.

For a mile or so along the river front, at the foot of the stone steps, in between

the sacred temples and buildings, men and women, old and young, were immersing themselves completely and filling jars with the sacred water to take home to their villages. At intervals we noticed sewers flowing into the river, and a Benares municipality boat in which a scavenger was doing his rounds, collecting refuse; we saw him picking up two drowned cats. From our boat we watched this pageant of life on the steps and on the slope; cows and calves and goats were everywhere, and the hobbled donkeys of the *dhobies*.<sup>1</sup> The guide told us that the *dhobies* first wash the clothes in mud and goats' droppings and only after rinsing do they use soap—we did not entrust our washing to the *dhobies* of Benares.

"In one place we saw widows—with hair cut short according to the prescribed practice—immersing themselves, stripped to the waist. On a platform were five men, wearing nothing but small loincloths, smeared with grey ashes, their clotted and tangled hair turned yellow owing to this constant application of ashes, and sacred symbols were painted on their foreheads. They never wear clothes as the ashes are said to keep them warm.

On other platforms were groups of *sadhus*, dressed in orange, surrounded by their disciples, and fat priests being massaged, or doing *joga* breathing exercises. Clouds of pigeons and swallows circled over the buildings and monkeys ran along the cornices. Nothing that has been written about the dirt of the Ganges is exaggerated; we saw the carcasses of a horse and a cow floating on the water. The bodies of people who die from smallpox, and of children under six "who have not yet developed their souls," are not burnt but are thrown into the river. At the end of our morning's sightseeing, we moored alongside the burning-ghâts and watched the columns of smoke over the funeral pyres. On platforms of rock by the water's edge the bodies are placed on piles of wood, around squat the male relatives tending the fire; in the case of the very poor, who cannot afford to buy sufficient wood, the half-burnt corpses are thrown into the river, and we saw pariah dogs fighting over human remains.

"On getting back to our hotel for a late breakfast, I read the morning paper aloud to H.; it contained the horrible news of our evacuating and blowing up the Singapore Naval Base, and of further Jap landings—the only cheering news was of the arrival of American reinforcements in New Zealand. It is dreadful being in India at this moment with British prestige lower than it has ever been, and surrounded by people who, for the most part, are not the least interested in the war, and many of them thinking how best they can use the crisis to their advantage. All these days we are continuously haunted by Singapore and what they are going through there.

"We spent a delightful afternoon, away from crowds, at Sarnath, where are the Buddhist ruins, four miles away. It was here that the Lord Buddha made his first five converts; and for 2,000 years it has been one of the four holy places of Buddhist pilgrimage, and zealous followers from all over Asia visit the shrine."

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From Benares we went to Allahabad, as the guests of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, an old friend, who put us up at the local hotel; owing to the wedding festivities of his grandson, every nook and cranny in his house was full. We were in no

<sup>1</sup> Washermen.



mood to dine out, with the extremely perilous position of Singapore weighing us down, but Sir Tej had asked us to dine with him *en famille* and we could not refuse. Indian weddings are long-drawn-out festivities, and the Sapru family had only returned from Agra, the bride's home, that morning. The actual wedding had taken place four days before, it was followed by an endless succession of banquets as is the custom. No honeymoon takes place, but the bride is brought to her husband's family's household. This was our first intimate view of a Brahmin family and we felt embarrassed at invading the household on so intimate an occasion. The charming young bride was dressed in a golden *sari*, and her hands and arms were covered with rings and bracelets.

Sir Tej Sapru is the leader of the Liberal Party and has always been a firm believer in the British connection, but we were warned by Indian friends that some members of the Sapru younger generation were "fanatically anti-British." Just before leaving the hotel for dinner, we heard that the three German battleships had escaped through the Straits of Dover; this event on the top of Singapore seemed the last straw, and we longed for a sympathetic atmosphere. Sir Tej welcomed us cordially and showed us his wonderful library of law books. He lives in an enormous house in patriarchal style, surrounded by his sons and their families, thirty-five in all. The house occupies three sides of a quadrangle, and each section of the family has its own suite. In the hot weather everyone very sensibly sleeps out-of-doors, and beds were arranged round the verandahs; on our appearance in the courtyard there was a kind of skirmish which was rather embarrassing—we saw female forms springing out and rushing into adjoining rooms, and they all looked most attractive in their *saris*, which apparently they wear at night as well. Presumably most of the family were tired out after the wedding festivities and had gone to bed early. Our party consisted of our host, his eldest son and wife, the bridal couple and ourselves. On the death of Lady Sapru, the eldest son's wife assumed, as is customary, complete control of the establishment; the woman in this way exercises much influence in Hindu households.

I had been told I should find Sir Tej in an extremely bitter mood against the Government of India, as bitter as any member of the Congress Party. Nothing could have been more friendly than the welcome he gave us, but we had hardly sat down to dinner when he embarked on a tirade against the Government of India, an experience to which we had become painfully accustomed during the past few months of travel, but which I had not expected in the house of a friend. To quote from my diary: " 'If Japan invades India,' he said, 'Indians will hold Great Britain entirely responsible,' which from my standpoint is very unfair, considering Congress's attitude towards the war. He thinks there is much fifth-columnism throughout the country, which only confirms what we have heard elsewhere. He was so busy discussing the shortcomings of the Government of India that if H. had not interposed we should have missed the 9.30 wireless which we were very anxious to hear. His daughter-in-law had been listening to Berlin that day and another member of the family to Tokyo. There was nothing comforting in the B.B.C. bulletin. . . . Next day we attended, at Sir Tej's invitation, the reception and garden party given by the legal fraternity in honour of Sir Maurice Gwyer, the Chief Justice. He had an unpleasant experience on arriving at the station that morning, despite the esteem in which he is generally held. Owing to the fact that two years ago he had criticised the

political activities of two students at Delhi University, of which he is the Vice-Chancellor, the local students at Allahabad University attended the station *en masse*, and shouted on his arrival, 'Go back, Gwyer.' The police were very much in evidence at the garden party, but nothing further happened. I had talks with several of the leading Indian judges, and met my friend, Pundit Kunzru, whose self-sacrificing life I have always admired."

Our next stopping-place was Lucknow, which will always be associated in our minds with the fall of Singapore. We were at the Carlton Hotel and on our first evening, through the thin partition dividing our room from our neighbour's, we heard the 9.30 wireless. The reception was none too good, but we thought we heard the calamitous news that Singapore had fallen; the next morning when Hasani brought us early tea we learnt from the paper that the surrender was "official." It seemed incredible; although for some days we had feared the worst, we had kept on hoping against hope that something would turn up, especially as we knew that General Wavell had been there for some weeks.

"The fall of the key-point in our defences is quite incomprehensible; it appears to be due to continuously under-estimating the forces against us. Our first two mornings at Lucknow we spent in the grounds of the Residency, and here is an impression from my diary: "The Siege of Lucknow was the outstanding event in the Indian Mutiny, it lasted in all for 140 days and Lucknow was finally relieved by Sir Colin Campbell; of the original garrison only one-third remained. I don't think I have ever been so stirred by the sight of the Union Jack as when I looked at it flying from the ruined tower of the Residency, it is the only Union Jack in the Empire which is never lowered day or night. Looking at it at this moment, with the unbearable thought that it had been hauled down at Singapore yesterday after only a few days' siege, was almost more than one could bear. To distract my mind I made a sketch of the old tower, and we wandered sadly about the little graveyard round the ruined church.

"The grounds are beautifully kept and we roved from building to building over green lawns dotted with large trees and clumps of purple bougainvillea. It is certainly a sacred place for anyone who believes in the British Commonwealth. When one remembers, apart from the constant shelling, that in the terrible days of the Mutiny siege, the besieged—men, women and children—were suffering from smallpox, cholera, and dysentery, and were bottled up underground in cellars, the wonder is that any survived. . . . We felt that in this blackest hour our tour of the Residency has been like a sermon. The persistence of the defenders of Lucknow, in the face of appalling odds, is still a characteristic of the British race, and the self-same spirit is going to help us to win through on this present occasion. . . .

"On Ash Wednesday morning we went to the early celebration at Christ Church; we were the only white members of the congregation, and all our fellow-worshippers were Indians or Anglo-Indians. On the walls of the church I noticed inscriptions to the memory of Sir Henry Lawrence, Outram, and others. . . . In the evening we happened to be passing the Roman Catholic Church of St. Joseph and saw the lights shining through the open doors, so we went in for Benediction. Bearded priests of the Franciscan Order were officiating, and there was a very good Indian choir. Just in front of us was an Untouchable mother; she had laid her baby on the seat beside her, and it played

contentedly with her bangles, being evidently quite accustomed to finding itself there. The Roman Church certainly gets down to the humble.

"Lucknow is an attractive town with many open spaces and a background of mosques, minarets and palaces that belonged to the former kings of Oudh, picturesque gardens, and wonderful trees. From the verandah of our rooms we looked down on a delightful garden, where British children, watched over by ayahs, were playing, and happy-looking British-owned dogs gambolled. It did not seem possible that these dogs belonged to the same species as the mangy, scratching and emaciated pi-dogs, the pariahs and scavengers of Indian towns and villages. The hotel was full of British officers, with their wives and families. On the day of our arrival a number of young Indians appeared; in our ignorance we thought they must have come to join up, but we learnt the following day that they had come to play in a tennis tournament."

Every walk in India is more or less of an adventure, since one never knows what strange sight may not meet the eye. At this time of the year the Bombax malabaricum is a delight; its bare branches are covered with enormous bright red blossoms, the Indian crows and other birds extract nectar from them, and sometimes the tree is literally black with birds. In the street a man was playing a tom-tom; a European-looking woman, dressed in a bright blue *sari* to match her eyes, was carrying a pink parasol, and followed at a respectful distance of eight feet by her bearer in scarlet uniform, carrying a diminutive handbag. We turned our steps in the direction of the strains of a band to find a wedding procession approaching, headed by the local police with bagpipes. Weddings in India play an important part in the lives of the people, and vast sums of money are spent on the festivities even by the quite poor who, for so important an object, gladly squander much of their year's income and incur heavy debts to the moneylenders. Following the band were mounted troopers; then came twenty men in flowing white garments, wearing orange turbans; after these followed a magnificent vehicle drawn by four white horses in which sat the bridegroom on his way to the wedding ceremony. He was attired in gold brocade with a gold turban, and gold ornaments hung down over his ears. On each of the side steps and on a platform behind the carriage stood attendants in salmon-coloured uniforms, waving plumed fans to drive away the flies from the bridegroom's head. How dull and drab western crowds will seem after these of India! Lucknow's monkey population is a large one; this morning when I was shaving, I looked out of my bathroom window to find a large monkey was running along the fire-escape just below; I handed him a banana, which he took up to the roof-top to eat. All our windows are covered with wire netting, for a reason I now understand—monkeys are so destructive when they get into a room. . . .

"The journey from Lucknow to Lahore is 600 miles. The dining-car was packed with British officers, a comforting sight with the Japs at our door. There was a military atmosphere in Lahore, and no wonder, because the Punjab is one of the greatest recruiting areas in India. It was the only part of the country where the community was alive to the Japanese menace; during our visit the Premier made a stirring appeal for an all-out war effort. At week-ends the hotel was packed with soldiers, a special band had been brought from Delhi, and we had not seen such gaiety since the Sea View Hotel at Singapore four months earlier. We only hope they will not have the same experience here. The *maitre d'hôtel*

who drew up the menu last night made an unfortunate choice in the selection of a name for the sweet at the gala dinner; it was called 'Coupe Singapore'—not a very happy choice under the circumstances!"

In Lahore, the capital of the Punjab, one is in another world. Here we were able to observe a provincial government, elected on a popular franchise, functioning efficiently, and therefore an object-lesson to the rest of India—due largely no doubt to one man, the Premier, Sir Sikander Hyat Khan, who unfortunately died a year later.

"I called to see the Editor of the *Civil and Military Gazette*, Mr. F. W. Bustin; just outside his office is a metal plaque stating that Rudyard Kipling worked on the paper from 1882 to 1887. We are always thinking of the *Jungle Books*, and have been re-reading *Kim*, which gives the best account of the Grand Trunk Road ever written. We lunched with the Glancys; Sir Bertrand is very highly spoken of and considered one of the ablest Governors in India. Indian posts do strange things as I realised—not for the first time—when Sir Bertrand asked me had I received his letter written fifteen days earlier, inviting us to stay? As it happened, we actually found it waiting for us when we returned to the hotel after lunch; it had been pursuing us from place to place! We met several I.C.S. officials, Indian and British, also an old friend, Professor R. C. Coupland; like so many recent arrivals he was suffering from dysentery and looked terribly weakened. We know something about the fatigue of this constant travelling and interviewing, so we are able to sympathise with him. To get the Muslim League point of view I went to see the Nawab of Mamdot, a fine upstanding and dignified Muslim, who assured me that, whatever might be said to the contrary, the vast majority of Muslims were behind Jinnah, and that the Muslims infinitely preferred the British to the Hindus.

"After the unkind things that have been said to us in other parts of India, it has been cheering to meet people who are free from any anti-British complex. From this Muslim stronghold H. and I drove to tea with a leading Hindu in the person of the charming and urbane Raja Narendra Nath, a landowner of the old school. He rather reminded me in appearance of the late Lord Bryce. He has the true old-word courtesy and a great sense of humour, and unlike many of the politically-minded, was eminently reasonable in his views.

"He and I sat on the sofa, with H. in an armchair on his right, next to her a portly daughter-in-law, in a *sari*, with a red blob of paint on her forehead as is the case with so many high-caste Hindus; then came the Raja's son. Menials pitter-pattered on bare feet across the floor with fresh relays of tea, disappearing behind curtains. We much enjoyed meeting the Raja; he was slightly deaf and when he became interested in the topic under discussion, quite unconsciously bawled at the top of his voice. In the midst of a dissertation on the Sikh problem in the Punjab, when he wanted some document, he suddenly shouted into space, whereupon a swarthy and turbaned secretary appeared from nowhere. I was surprised to hear that the Raja was the President of the local Hindu Mahasabha—he was certainly so much more moderate than some of its other leaders. Half-way through tea two sphinx-like Congressmen appeared, plus a magnificent old boy, presumably a Sikh, with a bushy white beard, in enormous turban and white jodhpurs, who sat silently by, listening to the shouting of the Raja and myself, all of a very friendly variety."

A few miles outside Lahore, at Walton, was the initial Training Centre where cadets not up to the standard of the Indian Sandhurst at Dehra Dun, were given a two-months' intensive course. On the day of our visit a class of cadets was just passing out, and so effective was the training that out of fifty-two, fifty had been successful—a remarkable tribute to the methods of Wing Commander H. W. Hogg,<sup>1</sup> the Commandant, whose name, by the way, was known throughout India for his wonderful gift in the handling of young men. He was full of plans for the enlargement of the Training Centre, and it was encouraging to find, for once, a man with such unique qualities as his in an important position of this kind.

A visit to the Assembly Building in Lahore was of especial interest because there, for the first time, we had a view of provincial autonomy in operation. Sir Sikander Hyat Khan, a Muslim, was the head of the Coalition Government, and an extremely able politician. I met him on various occasions, and he had undoubtedly great influence locally; but frequently also his views were sought in official circles, as he was known for his broad outlook and his desire to overcome communal differences. I asked him how far he supported the objects of the Muslim League, and he said: "I go with them three-quarters of the way." The last time I saw him was a few months before his death, when he attended as a guest of honour one of the Press Parties my wife and I gave at the Hotel Cecil.

It was easy at Lahore to get a conspectus of the political views of Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh. I had talks with several leading Sikhs and heard diametrically opposite views in a couple of hours. On the one hand I was told that they were entirely opposed to Pakistan, which perhaps was natural, as nearly 4,000,000 Sikhs live in the Punjab. Just as the Muslim does not wish to be dominated by the Hindu *raj*, the Sikhs on their part do not regard with equanimity the prospect of being permanently under Muslim rule; they emphasised the fact that they were racially and religiously linked up with the Hindus. On the other hand, I met Sikhs who told me they did not like the way they had been treated by the Congress Party. In this welter of opinion the one safe fact to hold by was that the Sikhs were 100 per cent for the Sikhs. In the Assembly Building I also met Begum Shah Nawaz, whom I had known at the time of the Round Table Conference—the only Indian woman, in fact, who attended all the Round Table Conferences; she looked amazingly young in her attractive *sari*, and it was difficult to remember that she had a grown-up daughter. The Begum is an active worker for the amelioration of the position of women and for infant welfare.

Two young Muslim journalists invited us to meet a group of intellectuals, so that we could learn at first hand of the growing strength of the Pakistan Movement. We were taken to tea at the house of a prominent Muslim and sat round a large tea table. My wife on talking to her neighbour, who was dressed in a *sari*, found to her surprise that she was an Australian, the widow of a Muslim! There is no doubt that young India has a special aptitude for political discussions, by no means the exclusive prerogative of the Hindus; for two hours I plied our host with questions and every now and then sought to bring the discussion back to the main subject of my inquiry, which was how far Mr. Jinnah represented Muslim India, and was Pakistan, as claimed by its opponents, merely a clever move on the part of an extremely able politician? Surfeited with impressions, when we returned

<sup>1</sup> Murdered four months later in the motor-rail outrage between Simla and Kalka.

home I tried to summarise the opinion of the meeting. "What it all boils down to is this—the Muslims say it is ridiculous to regard India as one unit, there are really two Indias, and they must be treated as such. The only way to achieve a peaceful settlement is for Great Britain to grant Dominion status to North-West India, and a similar status to the much smaller territory in Eastern Bengal, with a predominant Muslim population. These Muslims said that many reasonable Hindus would raise no objection, which did not bear out the opinions of most of the members of Congress and of the Mahasabha with whom we talked."

There would be some 20,000,000 Muslims outside Pakistan, and they would be minorities in the Hindu-controlled States. The essential thing from their standpoint is that a population of 54,000,000—or 10,000,000 more than that of Great Britain and Ulster—would control their own destiny and be enabled to enter into discussion with the Hindus on a basis of absolute equality. They assumed simultaneously that Great Britain would grant Dominion status to Hindu India. The Punjab Muslims with whom we talked, kept repeating that they had far more sympathy with the British than they had with the Hindus; and under no circumstances would they consent to a settlement which left them under the Hindu heel. As things are, they deplore the fact that big business and high finance in India are largely Hindu-controlled and they hoped that British capital would be available for the development of Pakistan. They said if Great Britain would only grant their request, they would never forget, and nowhere would Britain have better friends than among the Muslims of India."

## CHAPTER X

### PESHAWAR—GATEWAY OF INDIA

IN THE TRAIN FROM LAHORE TO PESHAWAR WE MADE FRIENDS WITH AN INDIAN doctor with whom we discussed problems of health and hygiene. He was gravely concerned about the infant mortality rate, which he said was terribly high, while the mortality rate among mothers was still heavy. In the end he gave us a sombre picture of the difficulty of arousing the villagers to the importance of discarding old methods. The village *dhai* (or midwife) whose methods are largely based on ignorance and superstition, still holds sway. We told him we had recently been at Benares and he said the pilgrims are one of the major agencies for spreading cholera throughout the country. Cholera infection is carried by the pilgrims who take home with them bottles of the "sacred" water. He referred to a very bad outbreak of cholera which had occurred seven years before and was undoubtedly due to this cause; it followed a very large pilgrimage at the time of a big festival connected with the eclipse of the sun.

Peshawar is nearly 2,000 miles from Cape Comorin and thirty-three miles from the Afghan border. The first really cold weather we had experienced since Melbourne greeted us, and we enjoyed the roaring fire in our bedroom, an unaccustomed sight. We spent a happy week with Sir George and Lady Cunningham. Sir George is regarded as one of the ablest administrators in India and has a unique influence on the turbulent North-West Frontier, where much of his life has been spent. The party included Professor Coupland and the Governor's brother, a planter in Malaya, who had left Singapore at the end

of January. Government House was only built in 1901 (when the North-West Province was cut off from the Punjab); it was more like an English house than any of the other Governors' official residences. The delightful grounds were tended by a batch of twenty prisoners, who worked under the watchful eyes of two policemen.

Once again we were going through an unpleasant stage of the war, and every day we listened to depressing news bulletins. It looked as if Rangoon were going the way of Singapore; would the Japs never stop? A day later the wireless spoke of the invasion of Java, and the Japanese were said to be close to Bandeong. Before the end of the week we heard that Batavia had been evacuated. The collapse of Java was just as incomprehensible as the Singapore disaster; we thought of the complete confidence of our Dutch friends and wondered how long it would be before it would be possible to get a true record of all those terrible happenings.

Peshawar is one of the great meeting-places in Central Asia; from time immemorial it has been India's chief gateway from the West. In the bazaars one rubs shoulders with Afghans, Pathans and Afridis, Jews and Armenians, and Mongols from Kashgar. It is only a few hundred miles, as the crow flies, to Soviet territory. I noticed for the first time since I had been in India, unmistakable Russian samovars. We were within the shadow of the Soviet colossus. Apart from its importance as a military centre, Peshawar is a meeting-place of civilisations; in the bazaars are to be found the finest silks and carpets from Central Asia. In the streets of the cantonment ramshackle and picturesque buses, red, green and blue, with little designs on their sides, and Kabul number-plates, rumbled along, threading their way in and out of the trains of camels, with their wild-looking drivers, who had been wintering in India, and with the return of spring were preparing to go back to grazing lands higher up on the other side of the Khyber Pass.

Peshawar is sometimes called the City of the Thousand and One Sins, though other visitors, among them Dr. Cox,<sup>1</sup> have referred to it as the City of a Thousand and One Smells! Owing to the prevalence of earthquakes, its tall and rickety houses are built with a framework of timber filled in with bricks. There are very few women in the streets, as purdah is closely observed; the women spend most of their lives confined to their houses and consequently tuberculosis is very rife. They dye their hair and nails with henna; according to Dr. Cox the reason for so doing is that the devil is afraid of red nails and not of white ones! At the Afghan Mission, I was told that it was not only in Hindu India that girl babies were looked on with disfavour. Men regard their wives as intellectually and spiritually their inferiors, and only good for child-bearing and cooking. We were told that girls are often given names which show how unwanted they are, such as "Senseless," "Enough Girls" and "Dead Thing."

In the North-West Frontier Province we were in the India of Kipling and of the British *raj*. One morning we drove out to the Fort of Shabkadar, it was like a lovely spring day at home; the fruit trees were just coming out and afar off we saw the snow-flecked mountains of Afghanistan. A fine-looking Pathan acted as our guide; he was proud of the fact that his father had fought in the British Expeditionary Force to Kabul. All day we never saw a European. We

<sup>1</sup> An excellent account of life on the Frontier is given in *Signpost on the Frontier*, by R. J. H. Cox, Church Missionary Society, London, 1942.

passed continuous trains of camels, with their shaggy winter coats; water buffaloes are used as beasts of burden, from afar they look like moving haystacks, with probably a small child perched on the top of the household possessions. Numerous Muslim cemeteries were situated on the banks of the rapidly flowing Kabul river; the tombs were without inscriptions, just little mounds with pebbles and stones on them, or perhaps a slab of slate as headpiece.

Wild-looking Pathans, carrying rifles, with cartridge belts, were a frequent sight; in the Frontier Province the price of a rifle is three times that of a wife. We were in the land of the blood feud and the vendetta. Murder is a common crime; seven or eight hundred murders are committed in the Province every year. "The goal of our excursion" (says my diary), "Shabkadar, a walled town with tier upon tier of flat-roofed buildings, the whole dominated by the Fort of the Frontier Constabulary, a brick building with a tall round tower, from which flew the Union Jack—a look-out post against hostile tribes, also used nowadays for spotting aircraft. We walked through the winding and narrow streets, the guard presenting arms as we entered the courtyard. There we found beds of familiar flowers, planted by the previous Commandant; the air was sweet with the scent of violets. A small English child was playing with a dog.

"We were welcomed by Mr. Woods, the Officer-in-Charge, who has lived in this part of the world for twelve years. He and his wife are the only two British people in the town. He took us up the tower, and we got a wonderful view of the valley and the mountain ranges. The Commandant's sitting-room was like a room in an old Scotch castle, with thick walls and very deep windows; moreover, his wife had made it delightful with bowls of sweet-peas—it was a little bit of home in a wild and elemental world. I wonder what will happen to these forts when Dominion status is granted; perhaps we may make a treaty with the Pakistan of the future, and agree to share in the defences of North-West India for a term of years!"

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Dr. Khan Saheb, the ex-Premier, is a picturesque figure; he is a Muslim but a supporter of Congress. His brother, Abdul Gaffar Khan, was the leader of the Red Shirt Rebellion in April, 1930, and is known as the "Frontier Gandhi." Dr. Khan Saheb's wife hails from Northamptonshire, and her speech "bewrayeth" her. We called to see Dr. Khan Saheb in his somewhat ramshackle dwelling, for the recent rains had destroyed some of the outer walls. "We could get no response to our knocks on the front door, so we walked along the verandah and tried to get in through one of the four French windows but they were all barred. We thought there must have been some mistake as it seemed impossible to attract attention. A dog barked in the nether regions and suddenly two bearers appeared, and we were ushered into a gloomy sitting-room.

"Through a half-open door we saw a form lying, under a brown rug, on a bed. The figure arose, discarded the rug, and in primrose-coloured shirt and pyjama suit, came to shake hands with us. Since his student days in London the ex-Premier has had an adventurous political career, and has spent five years in prison. There is something nice about him, but there is a wild look in his eyes. It is not easy to discuss world conditions with him for he is hypnotised by political slogans. He said that Hitler's attack on Russia was a stroke of



genius, as it had united all Europe under Nazism! He is tied to the Congress machine and, of course, refused to admit that there was any essential difference between Hindus and Mussulmans. His views as to what would happen to India if the Japanese invade the country are disturbing; he repeated them emphatically several times, and finally just before we left he said: "Whichever nation invades India, whether it is Japan or anyone else, India will espouse the cause of the invaders against Great Britain." However he slightly qualified this verdict by adding: "The only Province that will fight against the Japanese will be the North-West Frontier."

As an antidote to Dr. Khan Saheb, I had a talk the following day with Malik Khuda Bakhsh, the Speaker of the Assembly, a bearded Muslim with a friendly smile, who I had been told would give me an impartial view of the Muslim problem. "He casually mentioned the fact that he was three years in prison, but politicians who have spent some years in prison are a fairly common phenomenon. He said the only time when the Hindus and Mussulmans were really close together, was immediately after the last war, when Gandhi espoused the Khalifat cause. He said that undoubtedly the Muslim League does represent the majority of Muslims, and he only hopes that Great Britain is not going to let the Mussulmans down. Once again I was told that they prefer the British to the Hindus and would certainly fight side by side with us against the Japanese."

Medical missions do a great work on the Frontier, and although the number of Muslim converts is small, the medical missionaries probably do more for the prestige of Christianity than any other group of men. We spent an afternoon with Dr. and Mrs. Macpherson, of the C.M.S. Afghan Mission Hospital, just outside the main gates of the walled city of Peshawar. The principal building is an old Moghul tower dating from the time of Shah Jehan. Dr. Macpherson and one Indian surgeon, assisted by two European sisters, one British and one Danish, do some 800 operations a year. The nursing is performed by Pathans from the neighbouring villages, who receive a three-year training. A decade or two ago these men would probably have been cutting each other's throats. "We were much impressed by the atmosphere of the place, just as we were at the Wesleyan Hospital in Mysore. In each place two or three Europeans were accomplishing the impossible, with a minimum of equipment. Dr. Macpherson took us up to the little church, built in the dome of the 300-years-old Mosque.

In a simple frame on a wall was a list of workers of the mission, whom they remember in their prayers on special days, these included the names of missionaries who had either been murdered or who had lost their lives while doing their duty. Amongst the names on the roll of honour was that of one of Dr. Macpherson's predecessors, who had lived in the house in which we had just had tea. He was very popular and had done a great work. One night someone came to the door saying that he wished to talk to the doctor; Dr. Starr went to see what the late caller wanted, and was fatally stabbed. Two sisters of the mission were murdered on one occasion when a man ran amuck; having first killed a small boy of eight, the son of a Danish missionary, he then broke into the hospital and killed a sister, her colleague died of wounds inflicted when she tried to intervene. We met the poor mother of the little boy at tea. Violent death is never very far away on the North-West Frontier, but these splendid men and women are too busy with their job to worry about their personal problems.

## CHAPTER XI

### AFTERMATH OF CALAMITY

WE RETURNED TO DELHI, AFTER OUR TRIP ROUND INDIA, IN EARLY MARCH, 1942. On our journey from the North-West Frontier we dined at the Lahore Railway Restaurant, and apart from the white-clad waiters, with their red turbans and sashes, we might have been at Charing Cross! There were groups of English girls with blazers, going back to school after the holidays, and British soldiers recently arrived in India; in short, we had seen more soldiers up here in the Punjab, both British and Indian, during the past three weeks, than in all the rest of the time we had been in India.

"We got a warm welcome on our return to Viceroy's House. Two daughters of the Governor of Burma were staying there, they had just arrived, having flown from Rangoon to Calcutta. We were told there had been much Fifth-Columnism, and the whole situation looked very ominous. What was more, since we were last in Delhi there had been one long series of disasters—Pearl Harbour, the sinking of H.M.S. *Prince of Wales* and H.M.S. *Repulse*, the capitulation of Singapore, the capture of Malaya, the Japanese invasion of Java, the evacuation of Batavia, and the bombing of Bandong. We heard much about the recent visit of the Generalissimo and Madame Chiang Kai-Shek; although conversation with the Generalissimo had, of course, to be carried on through an interpreter, his sincerity and ability made a deep impression. The distinguished visitors did not actually stay at Viceroy's House, but in the Military Secretary's bungalow. This of course permitted them greater freedom and they were thus enabled to get in touch with political personages without embarrassment, including Pundit Nehru, who was an old friend. During our first days in Delhi we naturally heard much war talk, in which we learned how all those who had been passing through from Burma were greatly impressed by the spirit of the ordinary Japanese soldier, and his entire indifference to death—he seemed to be, if anything, more fanatical than the young Nazi.

"Certainly the Viceroy looks terribly worn" (says my diary at the time), "as compared with recollections of our last visit, but the burden that he is carrying is stupendous. He fills one of the most difficult positions in the world. Imagine a whole continent of de Valeras! We were thoroughly tired of hearing him criticised during our wanderings, by both Indian and British alike; but he goes on doing his job without turning a hair, and is completely indifferent to newspaper criticism and malicious cartoons. He has given of his utmost; there has never been a more conscientious Viceroy. Sir Gilbert Laithwaite, his Private Secretary, owing to illness, has been absent for six weeks, which has, of course, put a lot of extra work on H.E. When H. was asking him about it, he told her he had really been through an awful time; for the best part of a week he spent the whole day in his office, in his dressing-gown, as he was just recovering from the 'flu himself, and his Military Secretary was absent also owing to illness. She inquired whether he was able to sleep, and he said that fortunately nothing affected his powers of sleeping; if it had not been for that, he did not see how he could have carried on. In the afternoons he always undresses, and has a twenty minutes' nap, and wakes up as much refreshed as if he had slept for hours. Sometimes he has to be woken

up to deal with an important despatch, and after doing so he can actually go to sleep again for another five minutes."

A great shikari, in the person of Major J. Corbett, with his sister, was staying at Viceroy's House—a simple and courteous couple, belonging to another generation. He made the jungle live for us, for there is nothing he does not know about wild animals and their ways. He and his sister were born in India in the post-Mutiny era, and still live in the United Provinces in the very house in which they first saw the light of day. In reminiscent mood he talked of his young days when there was a very different attitude towards the British *raj* throughout the land. If an Indian on horseback passed an Englishman, he would get off his mount and putting his hands together, in Indian fashion, salute him. But forty years of anti-British propaganda and a quarter of a century of the cinema, the awakening of Asia, and other causes have dethroned the white man—and sometimes, alas, it has been through his own fault. There is something sad about visiting India at this time; one feels one is at the end of a chapter, and unless a miracle happens it looks as if the story of the British *raj* is nearly told. Not that I would wish to put back the hands of the clock; for the peoples of India must ultimately control their own destiny. But there is no reason why they should not remain within the British Commonwealth if—and that is a big if—a spirit of compromise is shown.

"When we were at Peshawar Sir George Cunningham had spoken with enthusiasm of the garden at Viceroy's House, and as he is not given to overstatement, we took the first opportunity of seeing it for ourselves. At the back of the house is the formal Moghul Garden, with pink stone pavements everywhere, ponds flanked by small bay trees, canals of glistening water leading to fountains playing, and colour over all. Her Ex. is a great gardener. She thinks out all the colour-schemes and makes the necessary rough sketches with coloured crayons. Her master-hand is very evident. . . . The round garden is, without comparison, the most wonderful creation of its kind we have ever seen; it was designed by Lutyens, though whether he gained inspiration anywhere else I don't know.

"It is like a Roman amphitheatre, as it were, the arena being the pond in which the water is always kept rippling. The garden is enclosed by an eight-foot white wall, covered with every kind of flowering creeper; there are three levels of grass paths, like tiers, encircling the pond, and between the grass paths are enormous herbaceous borders. The circular wall is pierced by six gateways, and from each gateway pink stone steps lead to the water's edge. Standing on the top grass path, one gazes over successive banks of colour down to the pool, in whose waters all is reflected as vividly as the hues of the rainbow. Standing on the lowest level one gazes across the pond up to tier after tier of coloured blossoms on an undreamt-of scale. We followed Their Excellencies' advice and spent as much time as possible in the gardens. Who knows whether in the post-war world there may ever again be loveliness on this scale—especially when one remembers that it takes 160 gardeners to look after the place? H. asked H.E. whether he was able to get into the gardens every day, even for a few minutes, to which she got this reply: 'To be quite honest, I have not got the peace of mind to enjoy the garden; it is many months since I have had it. . . .'

"Coupland, whose tracks have been crossing ours, arrived at Viceroy's House shortly after we did, and we found it very interesting to be here at this fateful

week-end, just before Churchill makes his statement on India. I had a long talk with H.E. on Sunday, but it somewhat cramped my style when discussing India, as of course I could not ask him anything about Churchill's coming remarks. H.E. has given me a very nice letter about my Indian tour, in which he has said kind things about the comprehensive nature of my survey of the whole scene; he refers to the Indian political question as 'perhaps the most difficult and complicated constitutional problem of our time.' Wavell called in at Viceroy's House during the week-end; he is straight back from Java, and was in Singapore eighteen hours before it fell. I wish I could have heard what he said to the Viceroy! . . . Everyone that we talked to is entirely baffled by what happened at Singapore—one hears so many contradictory views. Why was that last Division allowed to land? Why was it we never heard about the water supply question while we were there? Why did our people think we could hold Singapore without adequate air protection? Why did an Australian politician say that the Australians fought to the last—a remark which implied that some others did not?—and so on, and so on. While we were at Viceroy's House the news from Java was increasingly bad; after all the high hopes that had been expressed we could hardly believe that Java was going the way of Singapore. It really is curious how two or three months after our visit the places that we have been to are threatened by the enemy; here is a list: Macassar, Celebes, Sourabaya, Djokjakarta, Bandeong, Buitenzorg, Batavia, Singapore, Penang and Rangoon. Small wonder that our friends are afraid to let us leave India!

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There was a very warlike atmosphere about the Hotel Cecil in Old Delhi, where we settled ourselves for a few weeks, before going to Simla for a short holiday. Every room was full and there were thirty tents in the garden. Apart from the Military and Civil Service people, there were many refugees from Hongkong, Singapore and Burma, as well as two dozen American airmen, whom we were very glad to see, newly arrived from the Philippines and Australia. We had actually booked our passages back to England via South Africa, when I was asked to do some work which entailed our remaining another two or three months.

"Yesterday evening we dined with Sir Henry Craik, Political Adviser to the Viceroy; he had given us valuable letters of introduction on our tour. Among those at dinner was the Maharaja of Bikaner with whom I discussed problems of the Peace Conference in 1919, when he was in the War Cabinet. 'He could hardly talk above a whisper, which makes us apprehensive.'<sup>1</sup> . . . I sat next the wife of the Nawab of Rampur, a delightful conversationalist; she told me she was engaged at four, married at twelve, and only came out of purdah eight years ago, before going to England. Prior to that she had never seen anything of the outside world, yet there she was carrying on conversation, at a sophisticated dinner table and speaking perfect English, and showing the deepest interest in mothercraft work throughout her State. There was also a very sad-looking Englishwoman, whose name we did not catch—she had just escaped from

<sup>1</sup> The Maharaja died in 1943. He had been an illustrious figure among the Indian Princes for many years.

Singapore via Batavia; her husband is still in Singapore and her son in Burma; she had had dreadful experiences on the journey from Batavia; there were 600 British refugees on a boat meant for 150. The engines broke down and for forty-eight hours they lay helplessly expecting every minute to be blown into the air. The water supply was practically exhausted, and they were rationed to a cupful a day. H. heard from her disturbing accounts of what happened at Singapore."

"16th March. W. E. Fisher, the American journalist, who represents *Time* and *Life*, has just come back from a visit to Gandhi at Wardha; he went there with a Chinese colleague, and while he exonerates Gandhi from being pro-Japanese, he said he feared there was a lot of Fifth Columnism in his entourage—much the same kind of atmosphere, in fact, that he had sensed both in Manila and Java, when he was there. Even on the west coast of India there is a great evacuation taking place among the civil population. I understand heavy air reinforcements are arriving; certainly during the last ten days we have seen a number of British and American airmen."

"18th March. The Cecil is incredibly full; soldiers and refugees of all sorts turn up at all hours of the day and night, and Miss Hotz always rises to the occasion. Last night twenty-one people were sleeping in corners, in the dressing-rooms, by the open-air swimming bath, in the drawing-room and in the lounge. A poor Polish refugee fainted on arrival; he was given a bed in the room of one of the hotel guests."

"27th March. We shall be rather glad when a large party of Maharajas and their families leave the Cecil, as their nurseries have a way of invading all parts of the garden. The nursery staff must be a pretty big one. 'Their Highnesses,' aged two, three and five, are always escorted by three people—a British governess, an ayah, and a magnificent turbaned individual who looks like a guardsman, who carries out the important duty of pushing the pram and fetching a large coloured ball each time 'Her Highness' drops it! The children of the Princely House, like so many small Indians, are very solemn and sit unsmilingly on their rug, spread on the grass. It is quite refreshing to see Christopher, a small British boy of three, full of Anglo-Saxon vitality, even though in his mother's absence it occasionally takes the form of belabouring his bearer! These bearers who look after children seem to have no idea of keeping them in order, and allow their young charges to have their own way. The other day H. took the situation into her own hands when Christopher had been kicking his bearer; she told him that it made her sad to see a little English boy setting such a bad example. Christopher instantly became as good as gold, and showed that he bore H. no malice, so that they have become great friends. The bearer stood mutely by but looked gratefully at H.

"An event in our domestic life is the impending departure of Hasani, who feels he must rejoin his wife and family in Calcutta, in view of the Japanese menace. He is a marvellous shopper and H., whose idea of hell is shopping in Indian bazaars (or, as a matter of fact, anywhere else!), revels in having an expert at hand, and entrusts to him the most delicate commissions, such as purchasing narrow pink ribbon for her undies, matching mending silks, and similar important matters of feminine toilet.

"A few days later, after the air raids on the east coast, we received the following letter from Hasani:

*'Dear Madam and Sir,*

*'After my departure from Delhi I reached Calcutta in the best of health, and pray to Almighty that his special blessing on you both. As for Calcutta affairs, people are panic stricken and leaving Calcutta every day. The condition is not favour, and if I leave Calcutta for outside station, what I have to eat? and have stick to Calcutta, and leaving everything on God. My best wishes and respect to Lady and your good self.' . . .*

"Abdul, our new bearer, found for us by Miss Hotz, wears his turban with quite an air; he has loose baggy white trousers over which his shirt hangs, surmounted by a European coat. He has an excellent ten years' testimonial from his last boss. He is a Muslim, was in the Army and has spent much of his life on the North-West Frontier."

"2nd April. H. had a harrowing account of the last days in Burma from a British refugee, who left Rangoon on 6th March. Fifth Columnism was so strong that the subversive elements did not seek to hide their views and going out in the streets was very unpleasant. He passed through Prome on his way to India; cholera had broken out among the Indian refugees, who had walked the 187 miles from Rangoon. He said he would never forget the sights that met his eyes—hundreds dying by the roadside, in full view of vultures on the branches of the trees. On several occasions they had to get out of their car to move dead bodies from the road, so as to get by. The British authorities did everything humanly possible; but there were no medical supplies or facilities. At the beginning of the trouble space on the boats going to Calcutta was offered to the Indians in Rangoon, but at that time they did not want to go. Subsequently, when conditions became really serious, they clamoured for accommodation and it was not available. He said: 'You can imagine the difficulty of dealing with thousands at the very last moment.'

"I am sorry to say there is too much drinking here, just as at Singapore; it disturbs us greatly; the people out here need some of Great Britain's war mentality. . . . I am afraid there is a lot of defeatist talk here in India, not only among Indians but among members of the British community, who ought to know better.

"Many of them seem to think that total war implies 'life as usual.' I do not wish to imply that there are not many British men and women doing excellent war work, but there are many, men and women alike, who have no idea of the seriousness of the situation. While I am dictating this, I am watching the dog-lovers taking their dogs out or sending them to be exercised by the bearers. On one hand, we read of the wheat shortage in the Provinces, and of the poor not being able to get bread; on the other hand, we saw outside a room last night a bearer preparing three large soup plates for his master's dogs."

"8th April. There is a leading Hongkong resident and his wife staying here; she told H. horrifying stories of Japanese atrocities. Seven English girls whom she knew well in Hongkong, and who were constantly at her house, were all outraged and murdered. She said that their family doctor was lashed to a pillar in his hospital, and his own daughter and other nurses raped in front of him, after which he was shot. . . . We have also met an Englishwoman who escaped from Hongkong on 29th January; she is also staying in this hotel. (Hongkong surrendered on Christmas Day.) She naturally refused to describe

how she had escaped, as it might get others into trouble. She gave a terrible account of the outrages on women whom she knew personally. One of the most harrowing stories was of a friend of hers whose wife was one of the nurses on duty in the hospital referred to above; she was only twenty-eight and very pretty, and must evidently have fought desperately, for, when her husband found her body, it was riddled with bayonet thrusts, and her face slashed about. He gathered her up to carry her away, when he heard the Japs returning, so he hid under a bed with her dead body in his arms, and remained there all night. Our informant told us that the Japs were not drunk, as we had originally heard, but were just fighting mad. . . ." On the corridor next to us in three adjoining rooms, are an evacuee from Hongkong, a mother and her small daughter from Burma, and a grandmother with two grandchildren from Singapore.

"We have just had a very interesting talk with an officer who got away from Singapore during one of the very last days. The capitulation, according to him, was not due to lack of equipment—except for aircraft—a very important exception—but largely to the antiquated outlook of those in authority, who thought in terms of the war of 1914 to 1918. Our casualties in killed and wounded were not heavy—we were defeated by the intensely practical Japanese and their superior mobility; at no time had the Japs more than five divisions against us. Time after time they walked round our defensive positions, seizing the vital roads in the rear. They were lightly equipped and wore sand-shoes and civilian clothes, and their forward battalions had bicycles. Their infantry was no better than ours; for their encircling moves by infiltration they employed specially trained troops in jungle warfare. Their High Command was much quicker in framing plans and putting them into operation than we were.

"They employed stalker-snipers, dressed like Malaysians, who formed the first wave in an encircling attack; these picked men acted as guides and were adepts at climbing trees. Local renegades were employed in their Fifth Column. They penetrated into our lines, shouting in English or Urdu: 'Where is such and such a company?' The enemy possessed absolute air superiority. During six weeks our friend only saw one British aeroplane. The Japanese artillery was not as effective as ours; our anti-tank defences failed owing to lack of practical training. Lives were lost through junior officers not having been provided with maps. . . . Among the causes of the collapse of Malaya were the under-estimation of our opponent, over-confidence in ourselves, insufficient self-criticism and a marked lack of practical resourcefulness."

"12th April. We have been very much cast down by the destruction of the two British cruisers, H.M.S. *Dorsetshire* and H.M.S. *Cornwall* and aircraft carrier *Hermes*. This is a loss to Allied shipping in the Indian Ocean, which we can ill afford at the moment. The loss of *Dorsetshire* comes home to us in a very particular way on account of the happy morning we spent on board her in February; one can't bear to think of the heavy losses among these splendid men. It is disturbing to read some of the leading articles on higher naval strategy in the British Press, which have been querying whether there has been sufficiently close co-operation between the R.A.F. and the Navy. I know our friends on *Dorsetshire* told us they were convinced things would never be satisfactory till the Navy had its own air service. (Later.) We are glad to hear a large number of the crew has been saved.

"One evening a young sapper who left Singapore a few hours before the capitulation, came over to see us; he and thirty other British soldiers escaped in a little  $5\frac{1}{2}$ -knot tug. They cast anchor late at night knowing they were somewhere near a Dutch minefield; none of them knew anything about naval matters, so they went to their bunks and slept soundly, as they had not had any rest for days. Their alarm clock woke them up somewhere near the coast of Sumatra; while they were all peacefully sleeping, the little boat had drifted safely through the minefield! He said civilian morale in Singapore was very good, and the A.R.P. service excellent. During the last week's heavy bombardment he only saw two dead bodies in the streets, as they were cleared away so quickly. He naturally did not discuss questions of high military organisation, but gave the impression that there had been a great lack of cohesion and co-ordination between our various units. It seemed to him incredible that nearly 80,000 of our troops should have surrendered."

"23rd April. We lunched yesterday with a British official just back from Madras and the east coast. He was in Vizagapatam the other day when it was bombed by the Japs; he said that the Japanese aiming was fairly accurate but not much damage was done."

"2nd May. Simla. Simla is an extraordinary-looking place on the slopes of a pine-clad mountain, 7,000 feet above sea level, with a wonderful view of the Himalayas. Almost proverbially it personifies the British *raj*. Essentially the summer habitation for British officials and their families, it has a sprinkling of English shops, endless bearers, ayahs, and all the paraphernalia of British households. I wonder what the Hindu *raj* or the Muslim rulers will do with Simla! When we talked to Nehru, he said he never let the heat interfere with his plans. But it is notoriously a quite natural grievance in normal times that the British *raj* has to move to the hills in the summer. Simla is like Bangalore and Peshawar Cantonment—a little bit of England planted down in the heart of Asia.

"There was a large streamer in the main street with these words, in blue letters, 'Protect your families, Join the A.R.P.' We can't help feeling that some of the Indian bitterness towards us at this juncture is due to the fact that, owing to the collapse of the British defence in Malaya and Burma, they think they have been dragged into the war because of us. If it had not been for the British connection—many of them think, rightly or wrongly—they could have escaped war like Ireland. They believe they could have 'wangled' the Japanese, which I very much doubt."

## CHAPTER XII

### CRIPPS IN DELHI

"27TH MARCH, 1942. JUST BEFORE LUNCHEON YESTERDAY, THE TELEPHONE RANG, to say Sir Stafford Cripps would see me this afternoon. Considering the number of people he has to fit into a busy day's agenda, I thought it was very good of him to fix up an appointment on the third day of his visit. His Chief of Staff, by name Spry, is a nice young Canadian, who hails from Ottawa; he worked under Coupland at Oxford. He met me on the doorstep and supplied me with



iced barley water of which I was in sore need as the shade temperature was over 100 deg."

"With a friendly smile and complete absence of formality, Cripps said: 'It is very good of you coming to see me,' a gracious way of welcoming yet another caller, considering how the number of his visitors has been legion since his arrival. He wears crescent-shaped glasses without rims, has a very alert mind and is extremely quick on the up-take. He has evidently come with very definite proposals, and I think will be difficult to budge, which is natural, as he has got the War Cabinet's instructions to get a certain scheme adopted. The details will be published three days hence.

"As far as I can make out, the scheme seems to be on the lines of the conclusions I came to after our tour; it recognises that the two main bodies to be placated are the Congress Party and the Muslim League. I do not know whether he will carry his point of view, after he has seen Savarkar of the Hindu Mahasabha, who also claims to speak for the rest of the organised Hindus. I gather that the scheme does admit the Muslim demand for self-determination. He said: 'I think we have a scheme that will do two things; it will satisfy Congress's demand for independence, and enable Muslim India to control its own destiny, and not be under the Hindu *raj*.' To which I replied: 'Well, if you have done that, you have achieved the practically impossible.'"

"30th March. The whole life of New Delhi has been dominated by the Cripps visit; no one could have taken more trouble than he has with the Press, he sees them every alternate day, and I have never witnessed anything like his patience in answering questions; he must have a strong physique to stand up to the strain. First of all, he had the tiring flight from London to Karachi; for the past week he has been plunged into a succession of interviews, some of them lasting two hours, with all the Indian leaders. Then in the evening, after 10 o'clock, he goes round to see the Viceroy for a final talk. Apart from Churchill and Roosevelt, I don't think I have ever seen anyone quicker at repartee, or anyone who can deal more successfully with over-persistent journalists. He is a good advertisement for vegetarianism, a way of life which he and Gandhi share in common!"

"Yesterday, Sunday, 29th March, was an historic day, whatever the outcome of the War Cabinet's proposals. American journalistic friends have been much impressed by the manner in which Cripps has been handling the situation; the only party he has attended since he has been here was a tea-time reception on the lawn outside the Imperial Secretariat. At 5 o'clock it was still stifling; the haze over Viceroy's House made the sky look quite white, and flocks of grey crows swept overhead on their way homewards. A few minutes before six we left the tea-party and walked across to the Central Conference Hall in the Secretariat; there must have been between two and three hundred journalists present; 'Sandy' Inglis of the *Times* said he had never seen such a Press gathering in Delhi. Cripps got up and in a very clear voice read the statement which accompanied the draft declaration. He read it so well, with emphasis on just the right words that it certainly did not sound like an official statement. He looked slim standing there, in the light-coloured suit which the Press informs us he wore when last in India two and a half years ago, but with a red flower in his buttonhole. His legal experience stood him in good stead and his good humour endured till the end, though after about two hours of gruelling questions I once

or twice wondered whether it would hold out.<sup>1</sup> Never once was he at a loss and he certainly had the sympathy of his hearers. The entirely new feature of the proposals is that any non-acceding Province can become a Dominion on the basis of equality with the Indian Union.

"Half-way through the proceedings it grew very hot in the Conference Hall. Cripps took off his coat and stood before us in a short-sleeved shirt, and there was a sympathetic murmur at this informality. . . . After looking at his wrist-watch shortly before eight, he said: 'I will answer three more questions—the meeting must terminate at eight.' Some of his replies had a Rooseveltian touch of humour. For instance, he was asked a question about Australia's defence problem, and his reply was: 'The position in Australia to-day is that the whole thing is under American control!' which caused much laughter. He was asked whether the draft was final, and replied: 'It is final for to-day.'"

"Just before going into the meeting I was told that Gandhi stood for complete rejection of the declaration, but that Nehru and Rajagopalachari were for its acceptance."

"12th April. Four or five days ago the prospect of a British-Indian settlement seemed much brighter, but by Friday we heard that the whole thing was going to break down. Yesterday, 11th April, was the fateful day when Cripps made his good-bye statement. H. and I both had invitations for the final gathering. We left the Cecil shortly after eleven and tried to keep the windows of our taxi open, but waves of scorching air blew in on us, so we were obliged to close them. It was the hottest day of the year so far—103 deg. in the shade.

"It was a sad occasion and I could not help comparing Cripps's cheerful and confident demeanour of a fortnight ago, when he made his famous declaration, with his appearance at this final meeting. There were only about 100 journalists present; he looked serious, but just as much in control of his feelings as he has been all along. After the meeting Coupland told us he had been profoundly impressed by Cripps's complete sincerity and integrity all through these trying weeks. He treated the views of every section with absolute impartiality. Poor Coupland himself looked very much of a wreck, even thinner, if that were possible, than two weeks ago. The meeting lasted only half an hour, for after reading a two-page statement, Cripps said that he would 'answer some questions.'

"We had difficulty in making out some of these questions put by Indian journalists, as they spoke low and not in very distinct English. We admired the manner in which he grasped their meaning. It was a dramatic moment when he was asked whether the discussions would be continued after his departure, and replied quite definitely: 'The proposal of the Cabinet is now withdrawn.' Some of the journalists appeared taken aback by the finality of this statement. What has happened tends to bear out the major impression made on us on our trip round India—the political disunity of the country. Congress has not played helpful role, and Gandhi, in a Press message yesterday, referred to the proposals as 'poison'.

"It is all very tragic. The breakdown of the negotiations is to be regretted at this moment because of the effect it will have on the war effort. I can't see a real lining-up of the different sections in the country against the Japanese threat. I only hope that the pro-Chinese feelings of Nehru and his group will be strong enough to confound the Quislings and the pro-Japanese.

<sup>1</sup> I understand that afterwards he said he had never been through such an ordeal.

"I don't envy the Viceroy his task in the immediate months ahead. Five months in India should have accustomed one to the unfair comment on British policy in the Hindu-owned Press—it is always the British who are in the wrong, and never a frank admission that the disunity of India is the real stumbling-block."

"16th April. Yesterday I had another talk with Jinnah, as I wanted to get his first-hand views on the breakdown. The fact that the proposals were turned down by Congress and the Muslim League for entirely different reasons, is proof of the sincerity of the British attempt to act fairly by the two major parties. In the Press even Cripps, who formerly was regarded as an outstandingly fair Englishman, is now criticised: 'It was the voice of Cripps, but the words were Amery's,' and so on. Even Nehru, who is regarded as a friend of Cripps, has been bitterly attacking him. The supporters of Congress tried to paint a picture of a wily British emissary landing on innocent India's peaceful shores, seeking to stir up dissension among the people of 'united India,' where all is brotherhood and noble sentiment, save for the machinations of the British *raj*. Gandhi is quoted as saying that 'the British are obviously at their old task of trying to spread disunity.'

"Jinnah says that the Muslim League appreciates the fact that the Cripps Declaration recognises the principle of Pakistan, but he is convinced that the proposed Constitution-making, Constituent Assembly does not safeguard the Muslim position. He inquired whether I had read Nehru's statement as to the composition of the All-India Cabinet, as worked out by Congress, which of course I had; the Muslim League would have been in a minority of about one to five. Jinnah says that this would mean permanent Hindu domination, because in the present Provinces where there is only a slight Muslim majority, it is always possible for wealthy Hindu capitalists, acting on behalf of Congress and the Mahasabha, to buy the votes of unscrupulous Muslims, ready to line their pockets at the price of their principles. After all, political corruption is nothing new; we had our 'rotten Boroughs' in England before the Reform Bill, and in the United States Tammany political methods in the twentieth century have not been above reproach.

"The Muslim League turned down the Cripps proposals because its members are convinced that the duality of India must be recognised by the British if there is to be a lasting settlement. When the Hindus talk about majority rule, what they mean is Hindu rule, and they want to keep the Muslims permanently in an inferior position. Muslim India only asks to control about one-fifth of India's population, 70,000,000, they are quite ready for the Hindus to control the rest of the country. Jinnah fears that Great Britain will not deal with the problem firmly, and say that, once and for all, they will recognise two Indian Unions. From the Muslim point of view the fact that all big business practically is Hindu-controlled is very serious; this means that the Hindus control nearly all the Press. Both Congress and the Mahasabha get their campaign funds from the big Hindu industrialists, I understand. Economically the Muslim community is not nearly so highly developed, their big men are chiefly landowners and agriculturists. Another factor which acts detrimentally as far as the Muslims are concerned, is that the propaganda of Congress is so good that it gets the ear of visiting foreign, and especially of American, journalists.

"Much that was said in the House of Commons debate on the Cripps Proposals seems to me to miss the point. I notice, for instance, that speaker

after speaker in Great Britain says the Cripps visit has once for all proved our good intentions. One gets an entirely different point of view after reading the Indian Press. Only yesterday the President of the Congress Party stated that the Cripps Mission had not done anything to improve the atmosphere. Feeling rather depressed, I rang up a journalist friend who has been here many years; he says one has to take these things philosophically, and realise that half the vituperation indulged in by Hindu journalists, is merely part of their stock in trade, which they do not expect to be taken at its face value. This may be partially true, but I do think this year-in, year-out abuse of the British has had a disastrous effect. The only thing I have ever experienced like it was the Sinn Fein campaign of hate in Ireland."

The chief result of the Cripps visit has undoubtedly been that it has shown the outside world how great is the cleavage between Hindu and Muslim. It has also shown that there is some dissension in Congress ranks. Before the mission came one could not have expected a resolution similar to that sponsored by Rajagopalachari<sup>1</sup> at the Madras Congress Committee, urging the All-India Congress to waive its objections to the Muslim claim for separation if persisted in."

### CHAPTER XIII

#### TALK WITH JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

"7TH APRIL, 1942. TWO DAYS AGO, JUST AS WE WERE ENTERING OUR FLAT AT THE Cecil, the telephone rang—it was Nehru himself, who said he would be pleased to see me that afternoon; he has been staying with his cousin who is in the I.C.S. We arrived on the stroke of six, and he came to the door to greet us most cordially; and seeing H. was in the car, he asked her to come in, too. He had just got back from a 2½-hours' talk with Colonel Louis Johnson, President Roosevelt's Special Envoy. It was very good of him to spare us over an hour on such a busy day; he looked tired, and was suffering from the same kind of sore throat that I have, which he says is due to Delhi dust. He smoked three cigarettes during our talk, which is unusual for an Indian. He is the most carefully dressed of the Indian leaders that I have met; he wore a cream-coloured homespun shirt, hanging over his white jodhpurs, a yellow waistcoat, and his sockless feet were in black sandals. As it happens I had put on an old Etonian tie that morning, before I had any idea I was going to meet so distinguished a Harrovian, I laughingly apologised and he quite entered into the joke. For the first ten minutes it was rather an uphill job getting the conversation going; he gave the impression that he was still immersed in his previous talk, which was quite natural; but once we embarked on problems of future world organisation he became absolutely gripped by the subject. He has thought deeply and is certainly extremely able. He has a nice smile and on the platform is a 'spellbinder,' I understand.

"At the outset of our talk he said: 'The war has put an end to the old style of question we used to ask one another. When peace comes there will be an entirely new situation with a new set of problems. In the pre-war world the democracy practised by Great Britain, France and the United States, produced

<sup>1</sup> Rajagopalachari resigned from Congress on 30th April, 1942.

a great measure of political freedom, but it came to a standstill in the process of its evolution. It failed to solve the problem of the security of the individual and was entirely baffled by the problem of unemployment. Political democracy was not enough to solve these questions, and so economic democracy has become necessary. Great Britain and the United States were able to carry on because of their vast resources in the era after 1918, but political democracy collapsed in Central Europe, and the European Nations turned to Fascism to give them some measure of security. Fascism partly solved the problem which baffled the old political democracy. In the process of solving one problem, they created another—they deprived the individual of his freedom. The real problem is how to have individual freedom *and* security. The solution is the extension of political democracy to economic democracy.

“‘Of late years,’ he went on, ‘it has been popular to say that it is only Fascist countries that can take quick decisions, but slow decisions are not necessarily inherent in the democratic system. There is no doubt that the economic and social structure of countries like Great Britain is out of date. I most emphatically believe in the Socialistic form of democracy. The great surprise of the war has been the Russian military war effort, an effort that none of us could have foreseen. It certainly shows that the average Russian believes that he is fighting for something very worth while.’

“I asked Pundit Nehru: ‘Do you think, after this war, there will be some form of close association, on a permanent basis, among the like-minded nations?’ He quickly retorted: ‘What do you mean by “like-minded nations”? I agree with you, if you mean by “like-minded nations” those Powers that possess a common basis of co-operation because they have political and economic democracy.’

“Mr. Nehru foresees only one outcome of the war; he thinks some form of international co-operation on the basis of political and economic freedom, both of nations and of individuals, is inevitable. He did admit, however, that there might be in the immediate post-war years, and especially during the armistice, a period in which the balance of power would be the main controlling factor. He agreed that the conception of the League of Nations was sound, but maintained that what was wrong was the manner in which it was carried out. Before an international body can become a real force, all the factors leading to war must be tackled, such as armament manufacture being left in private hands. There must be no more domination of one country by another, and all nations must have access to raw materials.

“We then turned to a discussion concerning Mr. Gandhi’s adhesion to the doctrine of non-violence. The Pundit was quite frank; he said: ‘It is difficult for me to define the doctrine of non-violence because I do not wholly agree with Gandhi on the subject; as I understand his views, he holds that a man should put into practice the doctrine of non-violence as long as he possibly can, and only in the last resort, sooner than run away, he should use force. Gandhi realises that there may be moments when it is not possible for nations to put into practice the doctrines of non-violence, and if actually attacked it is preferable for a nation to resist with arms than to give in. The position of the Mahatma is that when capitulation to evil, or to an aggressor, is utterly bad, this should be resisted, preferably by peaceful methods; if a person is not capable of this then he should resist violently, but on no account must he submit or run away!’ This did not

seem to me to accord with views I have heard Gandhi express, nor with some of his public utterances.

"Dealing with the problem of post-war organisation, I suggested that the English-speaking world provided a nucleus around which a real concert of Powers must be built. Pundit Nehru replied: 'Big changes will assuredly take place in all countries, I can imagine no effective combination of Powers which excludes Russia, India and China.' He does not regard the British Commonwealth as a lasting institution. I then referred to Smuts' statement that the evolution of the British Commonwealth was the political miracle of the twentieth century, because it reconciles local independence and co-operation.

"Nehru does not subscribe to these sentiments, for he thinks that, apart from Great Britain, only nations with comparatively small populations have been linked together by it, not a single nation with a population of over 12,000,000 has been a member; that would be the real test. He was quite definite, he repeated: 'I do not think the British Commonwealth will survive the war, the only group of nations which will have a fundamental influence on world affairs will be a combination of Russia, China and India, controlling nearly two-thirds of mankind, possessing contiguous territories, and each with the same type of stupendous agrarian problem. India's relations with China and Russia must, in the nature of things, be most intimate.' I suggested that he was taking a good deal for granted, when one considers the present disunity of India, and when he so readily assumes that it will be possible to mould into a workable federation the three nations with the largest populations, China, India and Russia, with all their diverse elements. Presumably it is his ready optimism that waves aside the obstacles in the path of Indian unity. Mr. Nehru says most emphatically: 'I think India is bound to be one unit.'

"The problem of the right of Indian Provinces not to accede to the Indian Union is naturally uppermost in all minds. Nehru is willing to give the utmost local autonomy to the larger units in India and quoted Russia's example in successfully dealing with the Soviet Republics of Russia. He is anxious that India should establish intimate relations with its western neighbours, Afghanistan, Persia and Iraq.

"I asked him whether he thought Christianity had a future in India. He replied in the negative and surprised me by saying that he did not think it had ever played an important part in India as it had been so largely identified with the British *raj*, and the peoples of India had been obliged to make a contribution to the upkeep of the Established Church. He said that the story of Christianity in China was a different matter. There, undoubtedly, it had had a great influence, the result of both American and British missionaries, not identified with a dominant foreign Power. He said that he does not think organised religion has a large part, politically, to play in the future. Religion will be an intimate matter for the individual soul, and will not be exploited for political purposes. Each country must be left to follow its own spiritual outlook, and its own conception of life. He said: 'Religion will affect political and economic life less and less, it will only affect personal life. I do not think that Christianity will make much progress in Asia, certainly in India it has played no part in the national awakening, the Anglican Church was regarded as part of the governmental machine.'

"Nehru was, of course, familiar with Mr. Clarence K. Streit's scheme of federal union, but he sees no future for a stable federal union unless it includes India, China and Russia.

"Once again we returned to the problem of Indian unity which was much on his mind. Provided nothing is done to invalidate India's political and economic democracy and Indian unity, he would give every conceivable safeguard to minorities that the wit of man can devise. In the event of any section of India still persisting in desiring to remain outside the Indian Union, he would be willing to abide by the decision of any impartial outside arbitrator, such as the Hague Court. He refuses to believe in a fundamental difference between Hindu and Muslim, and even observed that Mr. Jinnah's grandfather was a Hindu—a statement which has been denied by Mr. Jinnah. I pointed out that in many countries, including Ireland, it was spiritual values and historical background, not racial stock, that divided people, but he made no comment.

"I asked him if he thought Great Britain had a special part to play in the new India. He replied: 'All nations have a part to play.' Turning to the past, I asked him whether in his view India owed much to Great Britain, he said that undoubtedly India owed much to British political thought in the nineteenth century, just as she owed much to the French Revolution in the eighteenth, and the Russian Revolution in the twentieth. Nehru was quite definite in thinking that Great Britain's chief contributions to India were 'English literature and English thought.' Finally I asked him what was the future of the English language in India, he replied: 'India is bound to retain English as its second language, for two good reasons—because English has become the chief world language, and because so many Indians speak it already.'

(This account of our interview, part of which appeared in the *Spectator*, is taken from the actual copy which I submitted to the Pundit and which he revised in his own handwriting, though as a matter of fact there were only two or three small corrections, and he returned it within twenty-four hours with a friendly note.)

## CHAPTER XIV

### AMERICA RELATIONS OFFICER

IN EARLY MAY, 1942, WHILE STAYING IN KITCHENER'S OLD HOME, WILDFLOWER Hall,<sup>1</sup> facing the Himalayas, I received a letter from the Viceroy's Private Secretary, Sir Gilbert Laithwaite, inquiring whether I would be prepared to undertake the work of America Relations Officer for the Government of India. The proposal made a great appeal to me because there were special problems owing to the political situation in India which required careful handling; in addition a large number of American soldiers would shortly be arriving and difficulties would inevitably arise. My experience during the last war in dealing with similar matters would be of value, and the Viceroy knew that I had; all my life, worked for English-speaking co-operation and had recently spent much time in the United States.

<sup>1</sup> Now a hotel belonging to the Hotz Trust, 7 miles from Simla.

We had intended returning to England the following month when I had completed some writing on which I was engaged, but I at once wrote to Sir Gilbert Laithwaite, expressing my readiness to undertake the work.

On 20th June my wife and I returned to Delhi, and the following evening we dined with Mr. Olaf Caroe,<sup>1</sup> Secretary of the External Affairs Department, under whom I was to work. After dinner we sat in his delightful garden, discussing art, Asiatic problems, and British-American relations—this was the beginning of a very happy association which lasted till I left India in April, 1944.

The position of America Relations Officer was a new creation and there was no precedent for my activities. Shortly afterwards a China Relations Officer was also appointed in New Delhi.<sup>2</sup> I had direct access to the Viceroy and to the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Archibald Wavell, as he then was, as America relations covered a wide field. Apart from a brief interlude during the last war I had never been a Government servant; at the age of fifty-nine it was not easy becoming a "new boy" again; if the experiment was a success it was largely owing to my being under so sympathetic a chief; not a day passed that I did not discuss current problems with him. My duties were purposely not too clearly defined by Lord Linlithgow. I frequently saw Sir Gilbert Laithwaite; however busy he was he had always time to discuss my problems and his wide experience was very helpful. I was known as A.R.O. and I had to deal with every aspect of the relations of any Americans who happened to be in India—officials, members of the Armed Forces, war correspondents and civilians—without, of course, impinging on the work of departments already existing, such as Information and Broadcasting, and Allies Liaison Section of G.H.Q.

America Relations Office was situated at the top of a broad and imposing red sandstone staircase of the Secretariat and was sandwiched between the External Affairs Department and the Political Department, which handles all matters dealing with the Indian States. The droning of the large electric fan in front of my desk in the hot weather was often drowned by the squabbles of the minah birds who inhabited the pillared verandah just outside my room; from it I looked out over rows of office hutments to the dome of Viceroy's House. Outside every office door is a wooden frame giving the name of the occupant and his official designation; by the entrance of each office, on a wooden bench, sits a chaprassi, a Government messenger who delivers files and office papers to the other departments.

On my desk stood a wooden stationery stand in which were tidily arranged office slips of every kind, red for "priority," blue for "immediate," yellow for "confidential," terra-cotta for "fresh receipts," grey for "note for consideration," buff for "signature," and pale grey for "draught for approval." It took me some time to get accustomed to the routine methods of the Government of India!

In the hot weather the officials wore for the most part white shorts and shirts open at the neck, with sleeves reaching only to the elbow, a most sensible form of dress. I had expected to find the members of the I.C.S. hidebound bureaucrats, as a matter of fact they were extremely accessible. If I rang up the head of a department I would be answered by the august dignitary himself, and not by his private secretary as in England.

<sup>1</sup> Now Sir Olaf Caroe, K.C.I.E., C.S.I.

<sup>2</sup> Sir H. Pridaux Brune, K.B.E., C.M.G.



Shortly after my appointment George Merrell, the acting head of the American Mission,<sup>1</sup> gave a party at his attractive house to introduce us to members of the American community. I saw him very often during the next two years and much enjoyed our friendly association.

In London, at the Ministry of Information, during the first world war, when I had the pleasant experience of dealing with many of the important American journalists who visited Great Britain in 1918, I was confronted with men who regarded the British with friendly feelings, who were only too anxious to take back to their own country a favourable impression of their stay among us. It was true that at the time of the Sinn Fein disturbances in Ireland, many Americans did not share the official British point of view as regards Southern Ireland, but while they were in the United Kingdom they were careful not to do anything which might embarrass the British Government. When American journalists wished to visit Sinn Fein leaders in Ireland, not in gaol, no objections were raised; our one desire was that the visitor should see every aspect of life in the British Isles and draw his own conclusions.

This policy of permitting American journalists to go wherever they wished and to see anyone they wanted to, made a favourable impression. They often told me subsequently that it was one of the things they most admired about the Ministry of Information in 1918.

There was something naïve about the complete assurance with which some American journalists arrived in India; they assumed that the Congress Party spoke for the whole country—the very term “Congress” was misleading to the American mind. Mr. Gandhi’s picturesque personality had been publicised throughout the American Press. They arrived by air at Karachi, or by sea at Bombay, having probably studied on the way Jawaharlal Nehru’s Autobiography or the intimate story of Mr. Gandhi’s quest for truth. Within a few hours they were met by courteous and intelligent emissaries of Congress, speaking faultless English, who explained that the matter at issue was perfectly simple! Great Britain, “the representative of moribund Western Imperialism,” had only to withdraw, and the “people” of India would be ready to assume control. Americans were reminded how much they had in common with “downtrodden India”—they knew something of British methods, they had shaken off the British yoke 160 years ago. India was only taking a leaf out of their book..

The American administration had been careful to warn its citizens coming to India to take no sides in the British-Indian *impasse*. Colonel Louis Johnson, the American Representative, went out of his way to make a favourable impression on Indian journalists, who presumably, he thought, represented all sections of opinion. He did not apparently realise that the able newspapermen he was addressing were almost exclusively Hindus, and that the three great minorities—Muslim India, with 90,000,000; Untouchable India, with 50,000,000, and the Indian States—were practically unrepresented, since politically they were by no means organised as were the Hindus through the Congress Party and the Hindu Mahasabha. The Indian States, representing a fifth of the population, had no means of making their voice heard, apart from the Chamber of Princes. Colonel Johnson pointed to the many things the United States and India had in common; on 22nd April he remarked: “I do hope that you and I together will get the

<sup>1</sup> Now the head of the American Mission in Delhi.

American people to understand that the people of India are so like the people of the United States."

There seemed to be urgent need, therefore, of assisting American journalists to get an accurate picture of the enthralling Indian scene in all its diversity. Several of the American journalists were stopping in the Cecil Hotel, so I decided it would be helpful if we invited leading Indians of various creeds and political affiliations to informal Press parties, where Americans would have the opportunity of hearing their views and asking them questions. These parties continued during my two years of office and took place at monthly intervals; they were entirely informal in their atmosphere and were attended by the leading American journalists and by many important American officials, both civil and military. During his short stay in India, Mr. William Phillips, the President's Personal Representative, made a point of coming.

Our first party was given in honour of Dr. Ambedkar, the leader of the Untouchables, who had recently been appointed Minister of Labour in the Viceroy's Council, the only occasion on which a member of the Depressed Classes has held high office. It was a great success, and the Americans heard Dr. Ambedkar talk of his days at Columbia University and describe the desire of the community that he represented, to get away from Hindu domination, under which they had suffered so much. Dr. Ambedkar said he did not see how India could be protected from external aggression without British help; he also emphasised the serious obligations which Great Britain owed to his people.

Among the others whom we had the pleasure of entertaining were Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar, a Hindu from Madras, Senior Member of the Viceroy's Council, on the eve of his departure to attend the Imperial War Cabinet in London, and we also welcomed him back to India after his year in England. Sir Ramaswami was well able to face a bombardment of questions, to all of which he replied with shrewd common sense and humour. He said frankly that he thought that India should remain within the British Commonwealth. At following parties various points of view were given by representative members—Sir Firoz Khan Noon, Minister of Defence, a Muslim, and Mr. Jammadas Mehta, an orthodox Hindu, a former member of Congress, President of the Indian Federation of Labour, but a bitter critic of Mr. Gandhi's. He referred to the growing importance of the Indian peasant class, more than three-quarters of the population. Another spokesman of group opinion was Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan, the Premier of the Punjab, a Muslim. The first Indian Premier we entertained, he was very forthright and made a great impression on his hearers. He stated that he considered that the Cripps proposals were absolutely fair, and they were largely rejected by Congress because of its Japanese sympathies. Finally, he said that the Congress disturbances, in the previous month of August, 1942, were largely due to organised Fifth Columnism.

Another ex-Congressman, Mr. M. S. Aney, a Hindu and a friend of Mr. Gandhi's, was critical of the British administration in many respects, and this, from my standpoint, was all to the good, as it showed that these talks were entirely spontaneous and the speakers could say just what they liked. Aney made a very interesting statement on this occasion; when the Viceroy's Council had met on 8th August and decided to take action against Congress, Mr. Aney was travelling. He said that had he been at Delhi he would have voted against the decision; but what he saw during the next few days, on his travels, in the

way of sabotage and wanton destruction on the railways in various parts of the country, made him realise that had he done so it would have been one of the greatest mistakes of his life. One of our most eloquent guests, Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, a high-caste Hindu, gave a brilliant speech in which he referred to the coming of Christianity to Travancore 300 years before it reached England.

Other guests were Malik Kuda Bakhsh, a Pathan who gave the point of view of the Pathans of the North-West Frontier Province; Begum Shah Nawaz, the leading Muslim woman who had just returned from a successful visit to the United States and spoke of her American experiences; Mr. M. N. Roy, an ex-Communist and editor of the *Vanguard* and organiser of the Radical Democrat Federation and others. Our final party was in February, 1944, when the guest of honour was Mr. Jinnah who defined the aims of Muslim India to a crowded gathering.

At earlier parties there was a very definite atmosphere of hostility on the part of the American correspondents towards the Government of India and any Indians who were ready to proclaim their readiness to co-operate with the British Commonwealth, and their questions were largely directed to emphasising the justice of the claims of Congress. But with the passing of time, and with their growing acquaintance with various parts of India, these correspondents adopted more realistic views. Many of the representatives of the American Press were experienced journalists and they had only to see things for themselves in order to obtain an accurate picture of India as it really is. Mr. Herbert Matthews, of the *New York Times*, was an outstanding example of a correspondent who spared no pains to get at the truth; his articles on India during his year's stay there did much to enlighten his fellow-countrymen. Miss Sonia Tomara, of the *New York Herald-Tribune*, was very enterprising and penetrated to the most remote parts of India. She gladly faced great physical discomfort in her search for news, Mr. A. T. Steele of the *Chicago Daily News* was another correspondent whose writings attracted wide attention.

Gradually there emerged a small group of well-informed American writers whose despatches were based on experience and real knowledge.

My two years' work was a very useful experience, it gave me an up-to-date survey of the problems that create friction between Americans and Britons—inevitable at the outset in a totally novel environment, and with the gruelling first experience of Indian hot weather on the plains, when, owing to ill-health and climate, tempers lose something of their normal equability.

## CHAPTER XV

### CONGRESS DISTURBANCES

"IN THE TRAIN TO KARACHI, 5TH AUGUST, 1942. OUR THOUGHTS HAVE NATURALLY been concentrated these days on the latest moves by Congress. Some weeks ago I was informed by an American correspondent that Gandhi was going to start Mass Civil Disobedience again. Like Hitler, he certainly knows his followers, they seem to be ready to go wherever he leads. All the American journalists at the Cecil have left *en masse* for the Bombay Meeting of Congress,

and I think some of them are beginning to realise the tortuous nature of the policy Gandhi pursues. There has been much criticism of his action by the Minorities, and I think the nuisance value to the war effort of what he intends to do will be great. I hear from someone just arrived from Calcutta that the small shopkeepers there who have been doing extremely well lately, are much averse to Mass Disobedience at this juncture, as they realise it will interfere with business."

We went to Karachi as I wanted to study British-American relations in one of the key places. It was a trying journey in mid-summer and the distance is nearly as great as from London to Moscow. Part of the way the train went very slowly; the Indus was in flood and the waters stretched for miles; we saw peasants up to their waists hauling goats into safety. On a spit of land a man was sitting under the shadow of a tree surrounded by a semi-circle of six motionless vultures, who remained there silently watching, presumably awaiting his end.

The desert of Sind is one of the hottest places in India and it was here that martial law had been proclaimed on account of the Hur trouble. Ten weeks previously twenty-six passengers on the through train to Karachi had been murdered and the Government of Sind was taking firm measures to overcome the Hur menace. At every railway station were companies of soldiers to provide escorts on all trains as a precaution against further attacks. I.C.S. officials were going imperturbably about their job with revolvers, and bandoliers strapped over their civilian clothes. The Civil Administrator of Martial Law in the district, who was on the train, showed us the scene of the massacre.

From the political standpoint a visit to Sind was an interesting experience, for hitherto only in Bengal and the Punjab had we found Governments functioning under the Constitution of 1935. Sir Hugh<sup>1</sup> and Lady Dow invited several of the Ministers to meet us and I had a long talk with the Premier of Sind, Khan Bahadur Allah Bakhsh, who was murdered a few months later. Although a Muslim, Allah Bakhsh was not a supporter of the Muslim League, he spoke very openly as to what he considered Great Britain's duty to the Muslims. He deplored the fact that the Hindus were as a rule much better educated, and he expressed the view that the Government of India had special responsibilities to the Muslims because in the past it had so often played into the hands of the Hindus. He thought the Government should do everything possible to equip the young Muslim for holding important positions in the official, financial, and commercial worlds.

I was much encouraged by the friendly feeling I found existing between the British and American Forces, largely owing to the fact that the Commander of the Sind District, Major-General N. G. Hind, was a man of wide experience and a good mixer; also from the American Forces I heard appreciative remarks about him, and the principal American officers met him half-way. My wife and I spent a happy evening when General Francis Brady invited us to dine at the U.S. Headquarters. We were the only two "Britishers" and we rejoiced in the familiar American atmosphere and felt very much at home. As Karachi was one of the first places where Americans were quartered on arrival in India, many stories were circulating concerning the lavish manner in which the Enlisted Men, newly arrived and after their long voyage, threw money about. They had not

<sup>1</sup> Sir Hugh Dow, K.C.S.I., the Governor of Sind, in which Province he has spent many years and on which he is a great authority.

yet become accustomed to Indian currency and the aptitude of the small shopkeeper to fleece the uninitiated. The British Other Ranks, whose pay was much smaller, resented this spoiling of the local market. Such problems are inevitable in war, and before long the Americans had bought their experience; they became accustomed to local ways, and no longer paid tonga drivers and shopkeepers two or three times their fare.

On 8th August the Governor flew to Delhi to see the Viceroy, when the whole problem of the Congress Resolutions at Bombay was discussed. Just before dinner on the following evening, after Sir Hugh Dow had returned, we learnt that there had been a sudden police swoop in Bombay and that Gandhi, Nehru and other leaders had been taken to gaol. "Although I think the members of Congress anticipated that something of this kind would inevitably take place, I don't believe they can have been prepared for the dramatic suddenness of the *coup*. I don't see what other course the Government of India could have taken; they could not have permitted, in the midst of a life-and-death struggle, a party in the State to preach sedition like this."

"12th August. In train to Lahore. Whatever Gandhi may have said recently, I am convinced that during last winter, when we were at Wardha, before the Cripps Mission, he was perfectly friendly to Japan, and regarded all the belligerents as more or less on a par. His recent expressions of sympathy for China and the United Nations, and his open letter to the Japanese were afterthoughts, and probably due to pressure brought to bear on him by Nehru and others. It was interesting hearing from the Governor at first hand of his talks with the Viceroy that very day, when all the Provincial Governors were present. He found the Viceroy calm, in complete control of the situation, and he was never more impressed by his mental powers. It gives one a comfortable feeling, knowing that at this juncture the skipper of the ship has taken no step without most careful thought, and only after the fullest discussion with his colleagues. The decision of the Executive Council to act against Congress was unanimous; it was an all-Indian gathering, apart from the Viceroy and Benthall. The two other British official Members, Sir Reginald Maxwell, the Home Member, and Sir Jeremy Raisman, the Finance Minister, were absent; the former is ill, and the latter is in London, discussing high finance.

"I spent four very busy days in Karachi, despite the disturbances, having interviews. Some Hindu shops were shut, a tram was set on fire and there were a few lathi<sup>1</sup> charges, during which forty-two people received injuries. The agitation at Karachi was chiefly carried out by students. The shopkeepers were not at all anxious to put up their shutters—they are too busily engaged in extracting dollars from the Americans. While at Karachi it was unpleasant being obliged to rely for one's morning news on the three Hindu-owned Congress newspapers.

"We have been passing through the flood area of Sind again; these are among the worst floods they have ever had, at one place the water was almost up to the railway line. One effect of the floods has been that Karachi was cut off from its hinterland, and the prices of vegetables, eggs, and other commodities, have been soaring. What with Hurs, floods and Congress sabotage, travelling in India cannot be called humdrum!

"We are lucky to have an air-conditioned coupé across the Sind Desert—

<sup>1</sup> Lathia, long bamboo stave, five feet long, carried by Police.

how well we realised at Khanpur Station, where the train stopped for an hour while we had dinner. As we emerged from our carriage, where the temperature was only 82 deg., scalding winds literally singed our faces. Even just before sun-down with the temperature 110 deg. in the shade, the local inhabitants evidently felt the heat just as much as we did, and were unwinding the ends of their turbans to mop their brows—one of the utility purposes of the turban! We threaded our way through dripping humanity, stepping over the emaciated dogs, that had not energy enough even to snap at the clouds of flies. Here as elsewhere in India, there were, of course, separate eating-places and water supplies for Hindus and Muslims.

"In the restaurant we were surrounded by young R.A.F. men just out from home. The fare provided was peppery soup, which nearly blew our heads off, and chicken which must have been nourished on desert sand, for it was quite uneatable. The R.A.F. boys felt the heat very much and looked quite done in, it was their first experience of travelling in India. The place was a furnace. We got into conversation with an officer, a prominent civilian in Malaya, who told us unpleasant things about the crack-up in the defences of Singapore, which he ought not to have discussed with strangers. His companion felt the heat very much, and by way of cheering us, told us that at Allahabad the thermometer had recently touched 125 deg. in the shade. A man he knew was found in his tent dying of heat stroke with a body temperature of 114 deg.! There has been a large number of heat strokes among newly arrived soldiers.

"14th August. In train. Lahore to Delhi. Yesterday we spent the day in Lahore. In the morning paper we read of the riots in Delhi and elsewhere. We saw a number of red turbaned policemen, going about armed, and others with lathis in their hands. In Lahore, as the majority of the population is Muslim, the disturbances have been nothing like so bad.

"There were ugly events in Delhi; the town hall was burnt down. I lunched with Dr. E. D. Lucas, Principal of the American Forman Presbyterian College, Lahore, a fine type of educationist. At one time he was a pacifist, but feels that at present force must be used. He considers that the world is going through the greatest crisis since the breaking-up of the Roman Empire. He says that many of his Indian friends, because of the initial Axis successes, think Germany and Japan are going to win, and are much surprised when he tells them of the real feeling in America to-day. He thinks that America has at last woken up; it realises that a crisis has come in the history of humanity, and that, if necessary, America will go on fighting for ten years."

The following extracts from my diary were written after our return to Delhi: "Our train was four hours late at Lahore and did not leave till after midnight. The stationmaster said there had been 'incidents up the line.' . . . When I went up to ask the Anglo-Indian guard of our train what time we should reach Delhi he flung up his arms and said: 'God knows. There is trouble all along the line and things are very bad in Delhi.'

"There has been a great deal of sabotage on the railways; we passed through stations which had been attacked during the previous twenty-four hours, rails had been uprooted, and carriages set on fire. We were very lucky to get to Delhi without misadventure. At Delhi Station there was complete pandemonium, necessitating troops and police everywhere. We managed to get the only available car, a very ramshackle conveyance, with a wild-looking driver.

We heaved a sigh of relief when we drove through the gates of the Hotel Cecil garden, where two armed soldiers were on guard. The official figure for the number of people killed in the riots in Old Delhi, in the past few days is forty, though we understand that the number is much greater because relatives come and take away the bodies, fearing suspicion being attached to themselves when the police identify the bodies. For two days most of the inmates of the Cecil 'stayed put,' apart from officers and officials obliged to go to New Delhi, for whom armed escort was provided. An English clergyman on his way back from hospital, where he had left his small daughter suffering from tuberculosis, was set upon by roughs when crossing a bridge and seriously injured. There has not been much 'non-violence' on the part of Congress sympathisers so far; as, of course, we had realised, it is not possible to preach hate for twenty years and expect the rank and file to content themselves with passive disobedience at a moment of tension.

"17th August. I have been very much impressed with the imperturbability of the Government of India officials; they carry on just as if nothing unusual were happening, and as if murder, arson and riot were part of the day's work. On my return to the office from Karachi they never so much as mentioned recent events! I have especially in mind two of the leading officials in the External Affairs Department, who have spent much of their careers in the North-West Frontier Province; one of them told me how they used to deal with civil turmoil. If they knew there was likely to be a riot, they rounded up all the bad characters in the district, and locked them up for forty-eight hours till the trouble had blown over. They had full details of the past criminal record of each individual concerned, and enough evidence to lock them up for a long period, but they just issued a caution and let them go—thus was bloodshed avoided on many occasions."

"22nd August. The widespread attacks on the railways have undoubtedly been due to Fifth Columnism, and the similarity of the outbreaks certainly demonstrates that the whole thing was organised beforehand. At the moment railway communication between Delhi and Calcutta is broken and in North-West India there has been a drastic curtailment of train services, as they are cut off from their normal supplies of Bengal coal. There have been many attacks on police stations, that remind me of Sinn Fein tactics twenty-three years ago. There seems to be a general belief that these acts of violence are parts of a carefully thought-out scheme, attributed to Congress leaders and Fifth Columnists; there must have been pretty close contact with the Japanese.

"Last night Miss Hotz told us a very ghastly thing. Two young Canadian pilots, who were staying here a few days ago, were murdered on the way south; they were dragged out on to the platform by a raging mob and badly mutilated.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In the Central Assembly on 24th September, 1942, Sir Sultan Ahmed, Law Member, thus referred to this tragic murder: "These two young officers were travelling as ordinary passengers, not on duty in connection with the disturbances; their train was attacked by an angry mob and stones were hurled at the windows of the carriages, in which the two officers were travelling. Attempts were made to pacify the mob, but in vain. Finally the officers left their carriage, and stepped out on to the platform; one of them was dressed in only a pair of shorts, and the upper part of his body was bare. They were both set upon immediately and hacked to death in the most brutal way. Their bodies were then paraded through the town on an *eleka* (a small Indian vehicle drawn by a pony) and were finally thrown into a river. The train was afterwards burnt. I do not know in what language one could describe this brutality."

While we were at dinner last night, Mr. Teddy White, the representative of *Time and Life* (New York), came up and said: "Have you heard that Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, Minister of Information, has resigned from the Viceroy's Council; he is leaving the sinking ship, things could not be worse. Don't you realise you are all sitting on the edge of a volcano? And to think that the rest of the world has no idea what is happening in India! Every factory in India is closing down, and before long the other members of the Viceroy's Council will also throw in their hands." "The Englishman is all right," he continued, "in his own country, but India is run by Englishmen educated at Oxford on the classics, who are still living in the nineteenth century, and are quite out of touch with modern world currents." We tried to point out to him that the British Empire had been through many unpleasant moments in the past. A few minutes later he came back to our table, with tears in his eyes, put his hand on mine which was lying on the table and said: "I am so sorry I came up and told you news like that," which was very nice of him, but as a matter of fact his rather emotional remarks had not disturbed us, as we knew that the Government was in complete command of the situation."

"22nd August. Things are settling down in Delhi; more shops are reopening, though one still sees British soldiers armed with tommy guns, and the Delhi Police with rifles, at key points. It was a pleasant sight yesterday afternoon watching British soldiers playing cricket in one of the open spaces in New Delhi, with a number of Indian spectators standing by."

"3rd September. Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, in a statement made to the Press, has referred to the organised outbreak of sabotage during the past weeks; on the journey back to Travancore, he said, he saw many destroyed locomotives and uprooted rails. I invited Herbert Matthews of the *New York Times*, to meet Dr. Ambedkar, leader of the Untouchables, yesterday at lunch. Matthews had been in India ten days, and said to Ambedkar that every single Indian he had come across was in favour of the Congress slogan of 'Quit India.' It must have been rather surprising for Matthews to hear Ambedkar say he hoped India would remain within the British Commonwealth!—and that he did not see how India could defend herself without British aid. He added, what of course we already knew, that the decision to arrest Congress was taken by the Executive Council without a dissentient voice: 'Not even a hesitant voice.' He emphasised the fact that, apart from the Viceroy, they were all Indians."

"9th September. Matthews was in Italy when the war started between America and Japan, he said that not a single Italian he knew was anti-British, but they were all vehemently anti-German."

"To show how lucky we were in getting through from Karachi last month, we saw that the mail train, when passing through the Hur country yesterday had been attacked. The Hurs first of all tried to derail the train by putting sand on the line; thanks to the engine-driver's alertness the plot did not succeed, but they shot at the train and hit one of the firemen and some women passengers."

"The bazaars in Delhi have been seething with rumours these last few days, and before I went to the office this morning I saw the announcement from the authorities stating that threats of an uprising to-day had reached their ears and they were fully prepared. Apparently Congress issued their threats in the form of leaflets, which were passed from hand to hand; one such leaflet stated that any European putting in an appearance in the streets to-day (9th September)



would be shot. I did not mention this to H. when I drove off to the office, as I was afraid of her worrying. As a matter of fact, I saw only a few armed police, a couple of British soldiers on motor bikes with rifles, and on my return journey some handcuffed prisoners under police escort."

"13th September. Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan, Premier of the Punjab, is just back from the Middle East; he had an hour's talk with Churchill in Cairo, and is amazed at Winston's grip of the Indian situation. . . . Sir Sikandar said that the Congress disturbances have not affected recruitment in the Punjab. . . . Sir Feroz Khan Noon, Defence Minister, also told us that unquestionably the sabotage and policy of destruction pursued by the mobs in various parts of India have been inspired by both Congress and the Japanese, and that there are quite a lot of Fifth Columnists from Burma now in India."

"15th September. I went to the opening session of the Assembly yesterday; a minor disturbance was taking place outside. A few Congress supporters, dressed in white, students for the most part, were being shepherded by policemen—they were kept about fifty yards from the entrance of the Assembly and shouted, 'Inquilab Zindabad' ('Long live Revolution'). A ramshackle red and yellow bus, with half a dozen Congress supporters, and surrounded by policemen, appeared on the scene; I suppose the police authorities thought they might as well let these young men shout their slogans. Further along, sitting on the steps of one of the other entrances, were eight women, Congress supporters. An American correspondent asked me, as I came out afterwards, had I seen 'the big show'? I told him I had!

"I thought the Assembly was quite impressive, and rather like a Dominion Parliament; it certainly is a gathering that would never be permitted in a Totalitarian country. Its members are allowed to criticise the Government of India and ventilate any grievance, imaginary or otherwise. The debate was carried on in English, and the spectator with an open mind must be impressed by this demonstration of the manner in which British Parliamentary procedure has been adopted in this country."

"22nd September. When the group of attractive young Congress supporters, who had apparently been chosen for their good looks so as to win sympathy, came up for trial in the Delhi gaol, most of the U.S.A. correspondents were present. Here was a good human story. One of the girls said, when she heard her sentence: 'How thrilled mother will be; she has been in gaol three times herself.'

"Winston's forceful speech on India has had a good effect; a leading Hindu industrialist said the following day, now he knew where he was, he realised that Britain meant business; he is going to back the Government and reopen his works!

"Mr. Jamnadas Mehta, of the All-India Railwaymen's Federation, was asked in my presence this week, why had Nehru, who at the time of the Cripps visit said that he was ready for Congress to fight the Axis, subsequently gone back on his statement? He replied: 'Because Gandhiji always allows his followers to say what they like, but when it comes to action, they have to do what he likes.' He also said that Gandhi, quite justifiably, boasts that he has never taken the life of a single man, but Mr. Mehta added: 'This is true, but he has enslaved the souls of forty millions.'

*Losses during the Congress Disturbances:*

*In the Central Assembly of 23rd September, 1942, the following figures were given: in dealing with the riotous mobs—340 people were killed, on the part of the Police, and 318 on the part of the troops. Troops were called out in sixty places. There were over 3,500 cases of the cutting of telegraph wires, 24 derailments, 250 railway stations damaged, 550 post offices attacked, 50 of which were completely gutted, and 200 seriously damaged, 45 police stations were destroyed.*

## CHAPTER XVI

### MEMORIES OF OLD DELHI

A DISTANCE OF SIX MILES SEPARATES OLD DELHI FROM NEW DELHI, AND EVERY DAY for two years, except for short absences on summer leave, I did the journey to and fro, once, twice, or sometimes three times a day. I don't think there is any stretch of six miles in the world that I know better. Except in the hot weather—and that was a large except—when the windows of the car were covered with dark curtains, I never tired of watching the pageant of Indian life in its amazing variety, wonderful colour, and incredible contrast.

Delhi is the site of many capitals, but the two cities to which I refer are the Old Delhi of the Moghuls, situated near the great Red Fort on the banks of the Jumna, and the New Delhi, fashioned by Lutyens and Baker, the capital of British India since it supplanted Calcutta, in accordance with the Royal Proclamation of 1911, formally inaugurated in February, 1931.

Commercial New Delhi is centred on Connaught Circus, with its colonnaded shops and green park, where the Poinziana regia in its scarlet magnificence is a wonder in midsummer. A mile and a half further to the south-west is official New Delhi, with the Viceroy's House, and the two vast buildings of the Secretariat standing sentinel on each side—the pivot from which radiate for several miles the bungalows of officialdom.

I am glad that I saw New Delhi before the octopus of war-time hutments had gradually spread its tentacles over the parks and open spaces; in this respect Imperial Delhi is no different from other capitals in a world at war. Many square miles are covered with the quarters of the British, American and Indian military authorities involved in the war effort of the United Nations. I sometimes wondered whether this huge agglomeration of human beings in New Delhi was really necessary for carrying on the war. A local wit summed up the feelings of many when he said, referring to the Arakan Front:

"Never have so many controlled the destinies of so few."

During my daily drives to the Secretariat the life of Biblical times was made a reality to me. Unchanging India provides the bridge between the world of to-day and that of 2,000 years ago. I had always wondered how the man at the pool of Bethesda, told "to take up his bed and walk," carried out the command. Hardly a day passed that I did not see a man carrying his bedstead, balanced on his head.

Funeral processions were a very common sight. Every day I saw sorrowing crowds of male relatives, escorting their dead to the funereal pyres by the Jumna, or to the Muslim burying ground. I thought of the widow of Naim. The body, clearly outlined and wrapped in scarlet, is carried on the bier shoulder-high. But it seemed strange that there was never a woman amongst the mourners.

On many occasions I have seen men sitting on the footpath, stark naked, and deep in thought. It is only when the seeker after truth reaches a certain level of holiness that he dispenses with the outward trappings of clothes.

In the mornings I passed large herds of cattle being driven to the day's pasturage, or sheep and goats following their shepherds and herdsmen, and villagers with their trains of camels and pack donkeys, bringing their wares to market. Every corner had its beggar, one could watch the blind, the maimed, the halt and the leper—they were all there, in monotonous sing-song voices appealing to the heart of the passer-by. I never realised until I came to India what the Hebrew writers were describing when they wrote of sackcloth and ashes; the religious zealot, with matted and tousled hair and ash-covered body is a common sight in every Indian crowd.

There was no monotony in the drive. Once I saw a slow-moving buffalo cart, but from afar I could not make out what the long objects jutting out behind were; only when I got abreast did I see that it was a dead camel with its neck twisted back so as to fit into the cart and the legs sticking out awkwardly—the camel was ungainly even in death. Suddenly the heavens darkened and we were amid a cloud of locusts; we emerged from the cloud and I looked up to the sky. The gauze-like wings of millions of the insects caught in the rays of the sun made a glistening canopy, and small boys were trailing a sheet along the ground capturing the locusts in their thousands.

Cow worship is very real. I saw a dignified Hindu in the main street of Old Delhi walk up to a cow on the footpath, and putting his arms round her neck, kiss her reverently on the nozzle! But, alas, when I think of Indian cattle, on the high road between Old and New Delhi, it is chiefly their ill-treatment that comes to my mind. Never a day passed that I did not see the tails of the oxen being twisted, or their drivers jabbing them between their hind legs with short sticks. Hindu friends, with whom I discussed this matter, regretfully admitted that this cruel treatment was a baffling fact; it will take long years of education to eradicate.

Indians possess a miraculous sense of balance. With complete unconcern they will lie full length on a high narrow wall or ledge, apparently peacefully asleep. Perhaps the greatest demonstration I ever witnessed of this seventh sense was when I passed one of the Delhi municipal dust-carts on its rounds, drawn by a fine white bullock. There was a young man lying asleep on its back, his head comfortably resting on the animal's hump and his body stretched along its broad back. Presumably the motion of the ox acted as a soporific; I should have liked to follow the cart and ascertain whether the ox stopped of its own accord at the next dustbin.

Large staff cars or jeeps needling their way through the traffic reminded me that after all I was living in the twentieth century. A herd of cows would sedately and unconcernedly file across the road, and even the military motor lorries had to give them right of way. No sooner had the cattle passed than girls would rush out on to the roadway and with bare hands scoop the dung, still warm, into the baskets they were carrying, to be dried in the sunshine and turned into fuel.

Owing to the petrol restrictions, the tonga drivers were doing good business, and the municipal authorities certainly closed their eyes to overcrowding. I have seen families of seven or eight packed into one of these small pony-drawn vehicles.

On one occasion I saw a sedate-looking man on the narrow back seat with a sheep sitting beside him!

In a disused arch under a railway bridge in Old Delhi an Untouchable family had ensconced itself, and at most hours of the day, I used to watch its members leading their ordinary life; perhaps they would be starting a fire with two or three twigs, preparing their sparse meal, just squatting endlessly, or lying asleep—a muddled conglomeration of rags and human beings. Their rags were ash-grey, their surroundings ash-grey, and mangy ash-grey dogs shared their habitation—how they lived no one seemed to know or care. They represented India's most baffling problem, the human "outcast."

I used to enjoy passing the procession of *dhobies*, enthroned on their cows, on the weekly bags of soiled linen. Sometimes they would bring members of the family with them, for the cow's back was broad and there was room for all. *Dhobies* can be seen in all parts of the country banging their clients' garments against the rocks with gusto—no wonder pyjama buttons had constantly to be replaced.

India's teeming millions spend a large proportion of the year's earnings on wedding festivities, and thereby get into the clutches of the moneylender, the *dhobie* is no exception to this rule; after spending his life wrestling with dirty linen for inadequate pay, there must be something very wonderful about throwing prudence to the winds, and for a blissful week indulging in an orgy of spending. One afternoon I saw a *dhobie*, dressed in shining pink satin, with tinselled head-dress; he rode on a white palfrey and was accompanied by carriage-loads of relatives and friends. In front of the procession marched the local band—the bridegroom was on his way to the home of his bride.

After two years' daily acquaintance with the drive from Old to New Delhi, I thought there was no sight with which I was unfamiliar. Yet during my last week in Delhi, I suddenly saw a man, naked save for a small loincloth, shouting at the top of his voice and rolling along the highway in the direction we were going. As he rolled he held a small brass pot aloft, without spilling its contents! Matthews, my driver, grinned and said: "Pagal"—madman. Apparently he was a religious fanatic rolling his way to the banks of the "holy" Jumna.

Once when returning from New Delhi in a taxi, before I obtained my own car, I saw in the middle of the road the corpse of a man who had just been run over. I shouted to the driver that we must report the matter to the next traffic policeman; he shook his head and put on speed, exclaiming: "Not his district." On getting back to the hotel I mentioned the matter to an old-timer; he was not surprised that the driver had refused to stop; the ordinary individual, he said, has a wholesome dread of being called as a witness, and therefore, at all costs, refuses to become involved. On another occasion we saw a man run over in Bombay; the hurrying crowds proceeded, unheeding, on their way and no one went near him. A corpse cannot be removed till a member of the sweeper class, from the lowest rank of the Untouchables, is at hand; no other caste will touch a dead body, I was told.

Near the barracks on most days policemen could be seen bringing in men, manacled and attached to themselves by chains. The prisoners walked along unconcernedly. On one occasion we passed two men, who, we subsequently learnt, were charged with murder; they were secured in the usual manner but in addition metal rings, fastened round their ankles, fixed to iron rods, were

connected by short chains with their hands; they walked with difficulty and escape was out of the question.

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We were indeed lucky to spend our two years in Delhi at the Hotel Cecil with its delightful garden. The Cecil is situated in the old residential quarter, near the Kashmir Gate, between the Jumna and the Ridge, with its memories of the Mutiny. It was a wonderful meeting place, where refugees from Hongkong, Malaya and Burma, Maharajas, journalists, soldiers and sailors, politicians and diplomats, forgathered. Over our destinies presided Miss Hotz, one of the best-known, and certainly one of the most universally respected, women in India. If ever a person lived up to the concept of not letting her left hand know what her right hand does, it is Miss Hotz. Faces would light up at the mere mention of her name. We were constantly coming across people to whom she had given a helping hand.

Near the hotel is an enormous compound, where her staff and their families live. In the autumn of 1942 there was a bad outbreak of malaria. Doctors were run off their legs and hotel guests and staff went down like ninepins; quinine was at a premium, there was an acute shortage owing to the fact that 90 per cent of the world supply of cinchona comes from Japanese-occupied N.E.I. With her usual foresight, Miss Hotz had laid in a large supply; she is a born nurse, and undaunted by these epidemics, went morning and evening round the quarters of the large Indian staff, prescribing for the stricken and their families, thereby giving a wonderful example of solicitude for the humblest employee.

The bird life of the garden was a never-ending joy. In few parts of the world can birds have such a carefree existence as in India, for practically no man's hand is against them; they undoubtedly realise that man is not an enemy. They were always flying in and out of our rooms, and in winter perched on the large motionless electric fan suspended from the ceiling. St. Francis would have rejoiced in their lot. A fellow guest counted sixty-five different species in the garden, and at second hand we heard of an ornithologist who had identified 220 kinds in Old Delhi. I cannot compete with such records, but we had our own list of familiar friends.

Indian birds are very vocal; there were some we knew only by their note, such as the coppersmith bird, to which I have already referred. One of our special friends was the ground dove; from Kashmir to the far south, we have heard it at all hours of the day, melodiously cooing "Take Berlin quick, Take Berlin quick," or in optimistic mood, "Take Berlin, too, Take Berlin, too," an objective which certainly seemed unattainable during our first eighteen months in India. Then there was the brain-fever bird, which repeats unendingly, on an ever-rising note, "Brain fever, Brain fever, Brain fever." Immediately outside our first floor sitting-room, a pariah kite sat in the neem tree continuously repeating "Gee-e-e Whirr." From this vantage point he and his mate looked down on the terrace, above the tennis courts, where in the winter months we always had our tea, before the weather became unbearable. Woe betide the unwary who did not keep their bread-and-butter and cake covered with a napkin; a sudden swoop and the whirl of flapping wings and startled newcomers would see the kite disappear into the trees with their cake in its claws. I have

actually had a piece snatched out of my hand as I was going to raise it to my mouth!

Other familiar birds were the common grey crow, the minah bird, the red-crested bulbul, the Indian robin, and the fairy-like hoopoe. Towards evening flocks of emerald green parakeets flashed across the sky in the setting sun. Less common were the blue jay, purple sunbird, olive-green tailor bird, and bee-catcher. Perhaps the most familiar of all the birds were the fantastic "seven sisters," who live, move and have their being in sevens, but perpetually appear to be quarrelling. Judging by the din they make, continuous existence *à sept* must be too much for their nerves!

Some extracts from my diary concerning the garden at different seasons of the year are given here:

*October.* "Since April the garden has been a burnt-up wilderness. A month ago grass seeds were planted on the lawn and we are now enjoying a taste of spring. There is a lovely border of canna lilies, red and orange, which divides us from the outside world, with banks of purple verbenas and zinnias. Roses and chrysanthemums are flowering simultaneously. The scarlet poinsettia continues to blossom in the most amazing way; it has been our companion right through the hot weather.

"The early mornings are delightful. We go for a stroll through the garden after breakfast, and from fifty feet away watch Mrs. Vulture on her nest and her mate landing gawkily on the tree-top with fresh twigs to strengthen the family abode."

*November.* "What makes November so delightful here is that flowers begin to appear in the garden again. Many flowering trees and shrubs are just beginning to burst into blossom—golden tamarisks, bauhinias and sky-blue petraeas, and of course, bougainvilleas of every shade.

"We have been amused these last days watching the two little lizards who have made our bathroom their habitation; they forage near the electric light and dart out their tongues at the moribund moths. The cooler weather seems to have gone to their heads, or perhaps it is the knowledge that they will soon be hibernating."

*Christmas Day.* "One of the attractive things about winter in India is that it is a time of flowers; during the summer, owing to the intense heat, the garden becomes an arid waste, without even a blade of grass.

"We went for a walk in the residential part of Old Delhi this morning, and saw two bearers, employed by a local resident, taking four dogs out for an airing. Two over-plump dachshunds in quilted coats were being led by one man; the other couple were sitting in a pram also in coats comfortably covered by a rug, and with a pillow at their back!"

"On the terrace, where we have tea a woman was feeding her pampered lap-dog, and in coaxing voice we overheard her say: 'Take it, Checko; think of the little starving Russian children—how glad they would be to get it.' Checko obeyed the first part of his mistress's instructions with alacrity!

*9th February.* "I saw a jackal running across the garden. We have often seen jackals on the Ridge near here, but never before in the garden, although we hear them howling at night."

*10th March.* "The garden is looking lovely, and we are rejoicing in the

flowers, knowing that we have only two or three weeks more of them—larkspur, snapdragon, hollyhock, masses of roses, sweet-peas and pansies.

"We are writing this in the garden on a windy morning, the leaves and dust are eddying in circles. The familiar neem tree sheds its leaves in the spring instead of in the autumn; the new leaves start coming as the old ones are actually dropping off."

*End of March.* "The weather is beginning to heat up with a vengeance. Large golden hornets keep flying in and out of our flat and a black procession of ants is busily marching along by the wainscoting. Our dear little lizards have reappeared in our bathroom after their months of hibernating.

"When we sit out under the neem tree we constantly feel a tickling on our necks and on putting up our hands find, either a large ant, dropped from the branches, or a little pale green insect; they have become so bad that we are no longer able to sit there for tea."

*April.* "There is a humid feel in the air. The green parakeets, difficult to see against the leaves of the trees, are squawking above us, and Mr. and Mrs. Vulture, sinister-looking with their gaunt necks, are taking it in turn to sit on their enormous nest.

"One of the chief drawbacks, as we approach the hot weather, is the dust; the paths, lawns and trees are thickly covered with it, and the sweepers spend much of their time sweeping the dry leaves and crimson bougainvillea petals on the lawn, and the clouds of dust which they raise settle on H.'s typewriter and get into our throats. All they appear to achieve is to transfer the dust and leaves from one part of the garden to another!

"Yesterday's main excitement was the slaughtering of a snake, yellow with green speckles, about six feet long; it crawled up the drainpipe into a flat next to ours. Fortunately our neighbour understands the ways of snakes, and instead of taking an unresilient stick, which would probably have only hit the ground and not the snake, he gave the reptile a tremendous blow on the head with a heavy riding switch. A friend of Miss Hotz's destroyed twenty cobras in her garden recently."

*20th April.* "We are always amused watching the little squirrels, or tree rats, as they are called here; they have striped bodies and long bushy tails and make incredible jumps from tree to tree and then bask contentedly on the boles, head downwards, or indulge in discreet love-making.

"We had a dust-storm and thunder last night and a real hurricane of wind, almost like a typhoon. The trees swirled and many branches were broken off; there were deluges of rain, and hailstones like large marbles on our balcony. After midnight the whole garden was illumined by sheet lightning for several hours.

"The flowering trees are now at their best. Last week the jacarandas were a dream of loveliness. Halifax's statue near the Secretariat is on a grass plot, surrounded by jacarandas, and the whole lawn was covered with mauve petals, but alas, their glory is short-lived. There is a wonderful poinziana regia near the swimming pool, a mass of scarlet blossom. It is delightful to see how much the pool is used by the British and American soldiers; for the most part the Yanks are the best divers. I wish they—the British and Americans—would mix together more, there is too much of a tendency for each nationality to remain aloof. Owing to the heat the last remaining flowers have been dug up and the

beds are just bare earth, though the wine-coloured bougainvillea on the pergola and on the walls of the hotel is still a joy."

*End of April.* "The temperature yesterday was 108 deg. By leaving the fans full on and all the windows hermetically closed we can keep the temperature in our rooms down to 94 deg.

"The nights are a great trial. We long for dawn; as we lie on our damp beds we hear the note of the brain fever bird. At 5.30 a.m. a factory whistle goes and the grey crows start cawing. The *bhistis*<sup>1</sup> water the pathways to lay the dust from their goatskins at six, and a blue-grey ox is walking sedately down the drive with the luggage of some lucky family going off to the hills."

*May.* "For the past seven days the temperature has been between 107 deg. and 110 deg. Not a breath of air, just still scorched atmosphere heavily laden with dust."

*July.* "Our blue-lined straw *chits*, outside the windows, are let down at 8.30 in the morning, and we do not have them pulled up till 5 p.m. All the windows are, of course, kept tightly shut and the curtains drawn, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. By these means we keep our rooms about a dozen degrees lower than the outside temperature of 108 deg. or 109 deg.

"The worst of the hot weather is that it has such a paralysing effect on one; apart from the physical discomfort of living in a drenched condition, one is listless, and drags one's body from task to task, as if all the zest of life had gone. One goes down to meals to be surrounded by other listless human beings, even the *khidmatgars*, who wait on us and should be accustomed to their climate, look hollow-eyed and emaciated, and are always crocking up. Not till after 6.30 p.m. is it possible to go out of doors; wearing dark glasses we go to the swimming pool to watch the British and American soldiers' disporting themselves in the water. We envy them their young bodies and abounding energy.

"If we are lucky, about 8 p.m. the wind may begin to stir the tree-tops. Some nights there are dust-storms, horrible at the time, but they do cool the atmosphere by a few degrees. Clouds of dust go swirling up and far in the heavens hundreds of kites plane to and fro—a sure sign of a coming storm. . . . Three nights last week we had swarms of flying ants; they hovered in clouds around the electric lamps in the hall, on the staircase, and in our rooms; they got into our clothes, flapped about in our hair, and dropped their wings all over the place. We have been living under semi-Monsoon conditions, but after three days of rain the weather has cleared again."

*July.* "The rains have come and we can hardly believe our eyes, but dust-storm or rain, the brain fever bird never ceases shouting. Since the Monsoon broke a week ago the heavens have opened. It is difficult to believe that this green Delhi, with its tree-lined streets, grass-edged paths and green lawns, is the burnt-up Delhi of a couple of months ago. One of the drawbacks of the wet weather is the increased activity of the insect world.

"Armageddon between man and the insect tribe has begun, mankind appears to be losing as the hordes cannot be kept at bay. There are enormous black ants as large as earwigs, small black ants, tiny red ants, flying ants, hopping beetles, spiders, grasshoppers and every other type of insect.

"Our belongings are getting rusty and mildew is appearing on our books

<sup>1</sup> Water carrier.



and shoes. A new type of ant is crawling over my writing table, penetrating into the drawers and cupboards, and even gets into our beds."

*August.* "Our American and British journalistic friends are steadily getting gaunter and gaunter; several of them have had jaundice. The little Persian cat has been walking about the garden with its tongue out, panting. Every living thing is devastated by the heat.

"The following is a true snake story, the episode took place in one of the tents in the garden. A fellow guest, lying on his camp bed, suddenly looked up and saw a cobra stalking a frog. As the poor frog hopped away the cobra glided after it, and disappeared behind a piece of furniture. Miss Hotz asked the officer, who was telling her the story, what he did, and he remarked quite indifferently: 'I turned over on the other side and went to sleep.' If my turn should ever come I should like to think I would act with equal *sangfroid*, but I have my doubts!"

*September.* "Indians always say that September is one of the most unhealthy months. The temperature is only 100 deg. but there is great humidity, and this is the time when insects take it into their heads to attack poor exhausted humans with renewed vigour before the cool weather comes. For about ten days I have been just one big bite; every conceivable representative of the insect tribe has had a go at me—the 'friendly' mosquito, the less friendly sandfly, and a very diminutive green fly whose name I don't know. In most parts of my anatomy I have large lumps, and they itch intolerably; I cannot go to sleep till H. carefully applies thin layers of cotton wool, soaked in listerine on the itching spots. I don't remember such bites since as a boy I was in the Caucasus over forty years ago.

"Just before the cool weather comes, the ants start changing their habitations and there are enormous processions of ants wherever you go; for instance, there is a two-way traffic across our dressing table, and along the top of H.'s sofa. Last night I put some iced water into a glass in which there had been a little sugar. I was feeling very hot and took a gulp; to my horror I found that the whole top of the water was covered with floating ants—how many I swallowed, I have no idea!

"Everyone is down with malaria; there is hardly a *khidmatgar* in the dining room; and most of the *chaprassis*, at the office, have been knocked over. Although the temperature is still high in the 'nineties there was a slight feel of freshness in the air this morning, for the first day for months.

"The other evening our friend, R. Grant Ferris, M.P., gave a farewell party to a dozen of us. That night it chanced that there was a pest of small beetles; they came in through the *chits* and were so bad that every few minutes during dinner, the lights had to be turned out and we sat in darkness. From time to time the *khidmatgars* came and brushed them off the table in heaps. After dinner Grant Ferris started a discussion on the treatment of post-war Germany, and as we did not require light for that and the insects were intolerable, we sat in the dark!"

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8th November, 1942. "It is difficult to concentrate; the news has been so wonderful these last few days. First of all, there were the preliminary and cautiously-worded cables about the beginning of the 8th Army's desert offensive, and we hoped against hope that good news would be forthcoming. One morning this week, on our way to breakfast, we stopped to listen to the 8.15

bulletin, and heard of the 9,000 prisoners and a number of tanks put out of action. . . . In the Censor's office yesterday I was told that our bag of prisoners is mounting towards the 20,000 mark. We are very proud that Alan,<sup>1</sup> Alexander and Montgomery are Ulstermen.

"Just before lunch two American correspondents told us there would be big news coming through about the American landing in North Africa. The lounge was absolutely packed for the 1.30 bulletin. We heard President Roosevelt's proclamation to the French, and the news of the landing of 'scores of thousands' of American troops in the dead of night, with the co-operation of the Royal Navy and the R.A.F. and an announcement that British troops would also be taking part. I so much wonder where exactly they have landed; if all goes well this should remove any fear of Rommel's troops escaping away to Tunisia, or Algeria, with Vichy's connivance. Our American correspondent friends say this is the greatest news of the war. . . . The success of the enterprise must have depended largely on the wonderful headway of the 8th Army. I think historians will say that the Battle of El Alamein was the real turning-point in the fate of civilisation."

12th November, 1942. "Practically for the first time since we have been in India, there has been a real war atmosphere; the wonderful news from the Western Desert and from French North Africa has raised our spirits. Not since London have I seen such crowds listening to the wireless. The audience includes British officers and R.A.F., American and Chinese officers, American correspondents, officials and business men.

"The success of the 8th Army is very timely, it will do much to restore British prestige in the U.S.A., where it had been at a low level since the fall of Tobruk. Herbert Matthews, of the *New York Times*, thinks that the victory must affect the intransigence of the Congress Party here, and compares the present optimism with the defeatism at the time of the Cripps visit, when many Indians firmly believed that Britain was done."

27th January, 1943. "Coming out of the Church of the Redemption, after Miss Joan Wavell's wedding, as we were walking down the steps, George Merrell, the Secretary of the American Mission, came up and said: 'Have you heard the wonderful news?' Rather shamefacedly we said 'No,' but the wireless at the Hotel Cecil was out of order at lunch time. He said: 'Mr. Churchill and Mr. Roosevelt have been in North Africa for nine days; they told the Axis Powers that there would be no peace till there was unconditional surrender. General de Gaulle and General Giraud have met and they are "buddies" now!'"

January, 1943. "One curious effect of the war here and of the Congress disturbances on our daily lives, is the complete disappearance of small coins; apparently most of the populace is hoarding everything less than the eight-anna piece. If a shopkeeper knows you well, he puts the balance to your account; if not, you are given a coupon entitling you to purchase something on another occasion. But the most common practice is to give you stamps of low denomination. Yesterday when I came out of a shop there was a particularly insistent beggar-woman and her small baby; I gave her a couple of one-anna stamps and she went away quite satisfied.

"The fuel and food problem has become quite acute. The Government has been caught napping. They ought to have appointed a Food Controller a year

<sup>1</sup> Field Marshal Sir Alan Brooke C.I.G.S.

ago, as this problem is a very difficult one, and military requirements of transport have naturally caused a shortage of rolling stock for purely civilian purposes."

17th August, 1943. "We have been so horrified by the letters appearing in the papers about the state of Calcutta. Owing to the food shortage, beggars are swarming into the city from the surrounding country, and of course there is no work for them when they get there. Although soup kitchens have been opened, they cannot begin to cope with the problem. One man saw as many as twenty-seven bodies in two or three days, all within a comparatively short distance of Government House. It appears to be very difficult to get anything really done. Bengal has its own provincial Government, somewhat similar to the State Governments of Canada and the United States, elected on a proper franchise, and its Municipal Council, which is chiefly Indian. Without having studied the facts on the spot, I can't make out where the blame really lies, but it seems scandalous that the largest Indian city should not be able to tackle such an elementary thing as removing dead bodies from the streets."

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE GANDHI FAST

AT VARIOUS TIMES DURING THE AUTUMN OF 1942 THERE WERE RUMOURS THAT Gandhi would use his strongest weapon, a fast, to bring the Government to its knees, and much apprehension was felt as to the possible results, especially when the Congress disturbances were definitely on the wane. In the East nothing succeeds like success, and by the end of October, when conditions were returning to the normal and factory wheels were busily revolving, it was generally realised that Gandhi had made one of the great mistakes of his career. In retrospect the August disturbances were then regarded as a Himalayan blunder, and just when the Government had satisfactorily dealt with the many problems involved in the disturbances, British arms secured their greatest triumph since the Battle of Britain. British prestige was soaring rapidly. It must have been a bitter moment for the Congress leaders in gaol when they realised how wrong they had been in their assumption that British influence in Asia was on the decline.

In this chapter I quote largely from my journal so as to give a picture of British reactions at the time:

12th February, 1943. "The American correspondents are coming hurtling back from Chungking and various parts of India as there will probably be a good deal of political excitement in the next few weeks. The general feeling about Gandhi's fast is that it was undertaken to get himself back into the centre of the picture; he is a great expert at staging come-backs and he can't have enjoyed having been set aside these past six months. I have talked to several well-informed people during the past few days and they think that, either as a result of pressure from his friends, or because his doctors will insist that his physique cannot stand the strain, he will give up the fast. Nobody thinks that he has any intention of dying. Most of my British friends, and some of my Indian, think that H.E. has come out of his correspondence with the Mahatma with enhanced prestige, and that the tortuous workings of Gandhi's mind are revealed by his replies."

21st February. "I talked to Sir Reginald Maxwell, the Home Member on the Viceroy's Council. He is upright and unemotional, and gives one a feeling of great integrity. The cartoonists in the Hindu Press seek to represent him as the symbol of 'the intolerable British regime.' Some of my American journalistic friends who have been present at his conferences or interviews, think that he can be annoyingly calm at moments of crisis, but regard him as a just man according to his lights and a fine specimen of a public servant.

"Gandhi has naturally monopolised attention these days. A. T. Steele, the very experienced correspondent of the *Chicago Daily News*, after reading the Viceroy-Gandhi correspondence, summed up his views in these words: 'Certainly the old man has at last met someone as obstinate as himself.' I do think H.E. has been very impressive in these two great crises, last August and now. He makes up his mind on a certain course of action which he thinks is the right one, and public clamour and emotional appeal will not deflect him from this course of conduct by a hair's breadth. Undoubtedly the fast was embarked on to try and blackmail the Government of India into surrender, and if the Government had weakened it would be good-bye to all democratic government as far as India is concerned—much more than Gandhi's life is at stake. The hunger strike is merely a form of force: you try and overcome your adversary by jeopardising your own life, irrespective of the rights or wrongs of the case. If the Government had weakened, its authority would have been completely undermined and Gandhi would have emerged with great prestige.

"According to the Press, it looks now as if nothing short of a miracle could save his life, and one hears all sorts of estimates as to the effects his death would have on public opinion. Anyhow, I am sure that the authorities are prepared for whatever happens. There has been quite a lot of apprehension as to the possible reaction of the populace in the event of Gandhi's death.

"Every hotel is to receive detailed instructions as to where the women and children are to go, and we have been told what to do in the event of serious trouble. Personally I cannot see why Gandhi's friends and his medical advisers have not persuaded him to give up the fast, especially as he said he was only 'fasting to capacity.'

"As several realists have pointed out, there was no object in bombarding the Viceroy with requests for his release, as the Government of India had said they were quite ready to let him out for his fast. The messages should therefore have been addressed to the Mahatma himself, but at times of emotion like this, feeling runs high, and common sense is conspicuous by its absence. Jinnah and many other Muslims have spoken of the futility of the fast, and have said that the Government could not bow to these coercive measures. . . . I saw Mr. Phillips, the President's Personal Representative, this week; I don't think he enjoys all these telegrams he is getting from America asking him to intervene. . . . Yesterday the view of the American correspondents was that only a miracle could save Gandhi."

25th February. "I will try and give an account of the ups and downs of the Gandhi fast. Our own personal view, from which we have never departed, is that Gandhi will not die, though on Friday, 19th, and Saturday, the 20th, we felt slightly shaken in our conviction. On both our visits to the Ashram we were impressed by his physical fitness, because he looked better than he did in London ten years ago. H. noticed how well his ribs were covered, when he sat in his

loincloth in front of us—his arms and hands were those of a young man. He was taking great care of himself on his very sensible vegetarian diet, with rest and massage. We felt that he would be equal to almost any physical strain. On the psychological side his absolute conviction that his presence is essential at a final settlement of India's problems, is a strong factor in favour of his survival. After the first nine days of his starve, the bulletins looked very grave, and many well-informed people did not see how he could pull through. At the week-end the American correspondents were literally waiting from hour to hour for news, because of the repercussions that his death would have in India. During those days a few craven-hearted British staying at the Cecil, started saying what a pity it was that the Government did not release him; they were probably only thinking of their own safety in the event of disturbances, and were influenced by the mass of propaganda appearing in the Hindu Press.

"Only a very strong man could have stood up to all this whispering campaign; fortunately in the Viceroy we have got that strong man, and some of the waverers have begun to hedge. All those who have had personal contact with H.E. are convinced that he will remain adamant. He realises all that is at stake, not merely the question of Gandhi's starve. The State cannot be compelled to adopt a line of action just because a popular leader threatens to sacrifice his life if he cannot get his way. If Gandhi survives the fast, which now seems likely, I think we shall hear much less of political fasts in future.

"At the moment of writing, sixteen days of the fast have gone and there are only five days to go. Of course, one never knows what may happen, with a man of Gandhi's age, but the present indications are that he will survive. All sorts of rumours are flying round; in addition to his oil massage it is known that he had been having sweetened lime juice, and I hear that he is probably getting saline injections. Judging by the remarks that he is alleged to have made to those who have visited him, it certainly looks as if he himself was not contemplating the prospect of death, and that he is convinced that he will survive.

"We always hear through Abdul, our bearer, what is going on in the 'bazaars'. On the 19th he rushed into our room just before dinner and said, 'Gandhi he dead.' I happened to have just returned from the Home Department, where I had heard the latest news from Sir Richard Tottenham; and when I questioned Abdul as to the accuracy of his report he remained quite unmoved. The next day when I asked him what the bazaars said, he answered: 'Gandhi he very ill,' which was an anti-climax. The day before yesterday the bazaars were definitely optimistic and beginning to believe that Gandhi would survive; Abdul's comment that evening was: 'Gandhi not die, he big botheration!'

"Certainly the Mahatma's death would have created a great number of problems. From the standpoint of the Government of India the failure of the fast will put them in a very strong position. The ups and downs of these past weeks are well illustrated by the talks I have had with the American correspondents; last week they were inquiring how the ashes, after they had been cremated, were to be conveyed to Benares. This week they are discussing such problems as to whether the doctors, with or without his cognisance, have been able to give him nourishment on the sly. I am glad to see the American Press has refused to be stampeded by the sentimentalists and realise that a fast by a political leader is blackmail."

3rd March. "The fast ended this morning, much to the relief of everyone. Congress has lost a good deal of prestige over the whole business. From the American cables, it appears to have been regarded by the majority as a political move to revive the waning influence of the Congress Party."

7th March. "I see our friend, Holburn, the *Times* correspondent, says that, rightly or wrongly, it is common belief that Gandhi's recovery is 'an act of glucose rather than an act of God!'"

26th March. "I have been so furiously busy that I have not written up my diary for sixteen days. At the informal party we gave for Sir Jeremy Raisman, Finance Member of the Viceroy's Council, when he met leading members of the American community, he stressed the point that one of the factors responsible for keeping down the subsistence level of the Indian masses is the terrific birth-rate; the population of India has increased 100,000,000 since the beginning of the century, and over 45,000,000 during the past decade. How to induce the illiterate masses to practise birth-control is a real problem, especially under existing hygienic conditions. . . .

"We lunched at Viceroy's House last week. H. had a very nice talk with H.E. who started straightway asking her about her asthma; it is wonderful that he should remember a thing like this when one thinks of all that he has on his mind. It was most interesting for her to hear the things he told her about the last weeks. She was more impressed than ever at the way he rises above criticism and public opinion, and follows the dictates of his conscience imperturbably. Only a man with great moral courage could have stood up to the pressure brought to bear on him, often from people who ought to have known better. One of the American correspondents said to me at the time that H.E. was just taking a gamble, but it was nothing of the kind. .

"At the week-end, when it was thought that Gandhi was dying, Congress supporters, who are to be found in all sorts of unlikely places, were openly stating that the Government of India was at that moment discussing what measures would be necessary for the conveyance of Gandhi's ashes to Benares; this knowledge made them realise that the Government of India was very much in earnest and would not be deflected from its policy. One of the stories that was going round Delhi just after the fast, was that when Gandhi was discussing with his son their next step, after having tried the 'capacity' fast, Gandhi said the obvious thing would be a 'fast to death,' to which Gandhi junior replied:

"Don't try it on while Lord Linlithgow is here!"

## CHAPTER XVIII

### AFGHANISTAN

IN THE AUTUMN OF 1942 CORNELIUS VAN H. ENGERT, THE FIRST UNITED STATES Minister to Afghanistan, and an old friend, asked us to stay with him at Kabul. The invitation, as renewed in the spring of 1943, we gratefully accepted. It provided an opportunity for studying one of the key countries in Central Asia from the friendly background of the United States Legation. We had started our holiday by spending a delightful fortnight with Colonel L. E. Barton, then

British Resident in Kashmir, and Mrs. Barton, at Srinagar. Their kindness knew no bounds.

When staying in Peshawar fifteen months earlier, I had visited the Khyber Pass, and the military authorities had provided a guide for me in the person of a Major in the Gunners, who had spent twelve years on the Frontier. I went up in a motor lorry, accompanied by British officers returning from leave, and a handful of Sepoys. "Going up informally like this, with a soldier who has served in Frontier scraps, and spent a dozen years in these isolated outposts, was a suitable introduction to a very dramatic side of soldiering in India. I was back in the pages of Kipling—an intruder from a different world; this was the real life, the other was the dream. Humdrum existence up here was made up of consorting with wild-looking tribesmen armed with rifles, of perpetually passing pack donkeys with escorts of Pathans, heavily laden camels with Afghan drivers, and all the while looking on a background of rocky mountains, with forts perched on key points, and every few miles a great stone fortress, flying the Union Jack.

"Half way through" (says my diary), "and commanding the bottleneck of the Khyber, is the Fort of Shagai, within which is quartered an Indian regiment. On the rocks overhanging the road are large concrete plaques, with the names of the various British and Indian regiments that have been quartered here—the Dorsets, the Leicestershires, the Lincolnshires, and so on. . . . Every village in the Khyber looks like a fort as it is enclosed by a twenty-foot wall made of baked earth, and at each corner are outlook towers with slits for rifles.

"On both sides of the road is tribal territory, and there the King's writ does not run, so if you wish to commit a murder, go to the Khyber, because once across the border no hand can touch you. I was told that one out of every twenty-five Pathans meets with a violent death. At the top of the Pass is the British cantonment of Landikotal, a miniature Aldershot—parade grounds and barrack squares—except for Indian soldiers playing hockey and Sikhs batting at the cricket nets." On that occasion I heard at first hand of the recent visit of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek; the dominant impression was that he had come to see our Frontier preparedness for himself, and what the likelihood was of our being able to repel an invader from the North-West. Japan was known to be anxious at that time to make peace with China on almost any terms. Apparently the Generalissimo had gone away well satisfied.

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"Just as the sun was rising we left Peshawar on 9th June, 1943 in the American Legation motor van, driven by a fine-looking Pathan, and escorted by our bearer, Abdul, who was very much at home in this part of the world as he had spent some years as a soldier in the Khyber, and was familiar with almost every rock.

"The distance from Peshawar to Kabul is 210 miles, the first thirty-three up to the frontier, along the military road built by the British, a superb piece of engineering. Most of the way one is in sight of the strategic railway, half-way up the mountainside, zig-zagging and tunnelling its way up to the Frontier.

"We crossed into Afghanistan at the small Control Office, where an Afghan official, wearing a grey sheeps-wool hat, was seated out of doors at a small table. When we presented our passports, he shook hands with us—a friendly gesture.

Around us, on two benches, under the trees, sat six tall blue-turbaned Pathans, smoking a hubble-bubble which is passed from hand to hand. The population on both sides of the border is Pathan, and speaks Pushtu. From the Frontier to Kabul is a distance of 180 miles, along one of the worst roads in the world; for the most part it is a rock-strewn track, with frequent pot-holes, and when winding its way across dried-up watercourses, completely loses its identity. The drive was a gruelling experience, and only endurable because we did not average more than twelve miles an hour. We passed through a sparsely populated, barren, and inhospitable land; with an occasional flat-roofed, mud-walled village. Every now and then there was a Martello tower where the stranded traveller can put up for the night, to be entered by a primitive ladder which is pulled up for safety. The first section of the road is much the worst; the only town passed is Jalalabad, and the district has many tragic memories of the massacre of the British and Indian Force of 16,000, including women and children, during the first Afghan campaign in 1843.

"Across the burning Jalalabad plain, in the midday heat, we went through endless dried-up river beds; we bumped up and down, and swayed from side to side, and I thanked my stars that I had brought two air cushions for H. The dust swirled around us, and over the bad patches the car crawled at only eight miles an hour. The sun beat down relentlessly and the metal rail, to which we clung, at the back of the driver's seat, nearly burned the skin off our hands. We gladly accepted the courteous invitation to lunch of the British Consul at Jalalabad, a slim and bearded Pathan, from British India. From Haji Arbab Ahmadali Jan I got my first insight of Afghan politics. During the meal an attendant, squatting on the ground, pulled the six-foot punkah, suspended from a pole parallel with the ceiling; it was a few minutes before we got accustomed to it, for punkahs are scarce in India nowadays; they have been superseded by electric fans. While we were talking, I was almost fascinated as I watched its rhythmic motion every time it just grazed our host's turban, and the waiter instinctively stooped as he offered us the excellent fare provided.

"There was practically no traffic on the road, apart from the endless cavalcades of nomads, trekking to the uplands to escape the hot weather, with their families, herds and flocks, brown tents and belongings. Their household goods—pots, pans; rugs, carpets, tents—were piled up on the backs of camels, and on the top there were perched every now and then an old woman, too frail to walk, a small child, and fluttering hens, uncomfortably tied by their legs. With each cavalcade were flocks of black Persian sheep, for caracul is one of Afghanistan's chief exports. Wherever there was a likely-looking plot of level ground, the nomads pitched their dilapidated brown canvas tents—'tent' is really a misnomer, for the most part their habitations consisted of a bit of canvas on four sticks.

"We spent the night in the Rest House, situated in the delightful enclosed old Moghul garden at Nimla, with its terraced fountains in disuse, its soaring cypresses and chinar trees, and silent grass paths, with a background of snowy mountains, pink in the setting sun. The Moghuls certainly had a genius for selecting delectable sites for their gardens.

"When we were about an hour's run from Kabul, on the top of a mountain pass, a peasant ran out of a little mud hut, near the solitary telephone line, and stopped our car—a wilder spot it would be hard to imagine—it was a message of welcome from Engert. Twenty miles from our destination we got our first



view of Kabul, nestled on a plateau, at the foot of bare mountains, with the great snow-capped peaks of the Hindu Kush beyond. The last section of the drive, over the Lataband Pass, is the finest of the journey; we have never seen anything more magnificent in our lives, grander even than the Vale of Kashmir. We were glad to be at our journey's end, and gladder still to see the welcoming Stars and Stripes on the U.S. Legation's flag-post, in this remote part of Asia, with our kind host on the doorstep to welcome us. Mrs. Engert and their daughter were unfortunately at Simla."

Mr. Engert is the leading American authority on Afghanistan. In 1922 he stayed there for six weeks as the guest of Amir Amanullah. He was the third American to visit the country, and when Washington decided to open a diplomatic post at Kabul, he was the obvious choice. Only one American visited Afghanistan in the nineteenth century, a Kentuckian, by name Masson; for a dozen years he wandered through Afghanistan, Waziristan and Beluchistan, and wrote a book about his experiences.

Whatever the nature of India's future constitution or constitutions, Afghanistan occupies a key position in Central Asia, serving as a buffer State between the vast sub-continent south of the Himalayas and Asiatic Russia; so that its welfare must necessarily be of vital concern, both to the Government of India and to the British Commonwealth. The story of British-Afghan relations during the past hundred years has been a very chequered one; there have been three Afghan wars with their records of victories and defeats, retreats and retrievements, missed opportunities, and deeds of great heroism. British policy suffered sadly from a lack of continuity; an era of expansionism would be followed by indecision and withdrawal, or a severe restriction of liabilities—presumably inevitable with the frequent changes of régime under a Parliamentary system of government. From 1880 to 1901 Amir Abdur Rahman ruled wisely and well. He was one of the most sagacious men in Asia, and despite past events and the bitter memories of the second Afghan war, he consistently worked for friendly relations with the British Empire. His death took place eight months after Queen Victoria's. He was succeeded by his son, Habibullah, who was assassinated in 1919. His successor was Amanullah, deposed in 1929, who in turn was followed by Nadir Shah, assassinated in 1933, when the present King Zahir Shah came to the throne.

Twenty years later, the signing of the Peace Treaty of 1921 with Afghanistan, seemed over-generous in its terms, for Great Britain was strong, though war-weary, and under no necessity to give Amanullah so much; consequently it was depressing to find that there still was considerable suspicion of British good faith. Afghanistan became an entirely independent State as a result of that treaty, at a time when Great Britain, after the stupendous efforts of the first World War, was anxious to reduce her commitments in Central Asia. Doubtless our Government of the day hoped once for all to place British-Afghan relations on a stable and satisfactory basis, and to ensure peace on India's turbulent North-West Frontier. But they were reckoning without Amanullah.

To the Afghans the treaty was a charter of independence, celebrated each August for an entire week with much pomp and circumstance. To the British it was just one of hundreds of treaties, whose records are preserved in the archives of the Foreign Office.

During the last ten years, and up to 1942, the influence of Germany and Italy steadily increased, and many leading Afghans were decidedly pro-Axis. A wise

observer described Afghanistan's foreign policy to me as "severely neutral," and added that those Afghans who had been educated in Germany were pro-German, or in Italy pro-Italian. As the inevitable result of the background of British-Afghan relations, and of the three wars, Great Britain was for two decades probably the most unpopular European nation. But during the past two years, great changes have taken place in the country's external outlook; for as the result of Allied victories in North Africa British prestige has gone up, and owing to Soviet victories, and the collapse of Italy, Afghanistan, like her neighbour, Persia, is now chiefly concerned as to the future intentions of Soviet Russia.

A new factor in local politics was the appearance of the United States Minister in 1942, for America is non-suspect, and so long as British-American relations remain on their present cordial footing, the United States can exercise much influence locally in furthering the interests of the United Nations. An uncertain factor in the situation is, however, that the future intentions of the State Department are unknown; and Kabul would like to know if American diplomatic representation will continue after the war. American influence is undoubtedly on the increase as more American teachers arrive and with the occasional visits of prominent American journalists. The three American jeeps used by the staff of the American Legation created somewhat of a sensation, and one of them was presented to the War Minister, who has become an enthusiastic admirer of a vehicle so evidently suited to Afghan conditions. According to Mr. Herbert Matthews of the *New York Times*, it looks as if American jeep manufacturers will have a big future in Afghanistan.

The Axis radio was still very active and was said to have many more listeners than the B.B.C. The Axis had been prolific in its promises to Afghanistan; when Hitler was victorious it was to be given most of North-West India, from the Punjab to Karachi. Despite the change of feeling towards Great Britain, and the fact that, as a result of British-American pressure, 200 Axis nationals had been expelled in the previous year, German influence was still strong and there were many admirers of the Totalitarian system.

Apart from the staff of the British Legation, there were only half a dozen Britons at Kabul; an officer in the R.A.F., who was aviation adviser to the Afghan Air Force, an engineering adviser to the Air Force and his wife, the representative of Rolls-Royce, and one or two other technicians. "One of the British residents told me" (my diary records) "that the small British community went through very difficult times in 1940. They had to go to the German-run bank for money, Germany was winning on all sides, and the clerks were elated and insolent. On one occasion the German Chief Cashier was more insolent than usual, but that same evening my informant listened on the wireless to one of Mr. Churchill's speeches, and it gave him new courage. Next time he went to the bank he gave as good as he got! The Afghan authorities evidently issued a word of caution to Germans residing in neutral Afghanistan; it was undesirable that they should so openly express their conviction that Germany was winning, although as a matter of fact, that belief was largely shared by the Afghans at the time."

Kabul has become a very important diplomatic centre, and for two weeks we were plunged into a whirl of social activities and met the leading diplomats and some of the members of the Afghan Government. Afghanistan is probably

the most orthodox Muslim country in the world and the women live in the strictest purdah; even the ladies of the diplomatic corps do not meet the wives of the officials. The *doyen* of the Corps Diplomatique was the Soviet Ambassador, Comrade Michailof. The diplomats are extremely hospitable and we attended functions at most of the Embassies and Legations, excepting, of course, the German, Italian and Japanese. The most influential men in Afghanistan to-day are the head of the ruling family H.R.H. Mohammed Hashin, the Prime Minister, and H.R.H. Shah Mahmud, the War Minister, uncles of King Zadir Shah.

Etiquette is strictly observed. When the Egyptian Minister, Amin Bey, and his wife, gave a dinner of twenty-four, in honour of the War Minister, I was informed in advance by Mr. Engert that it was a white-tie occasion. I had not brought my tail-coat since even at Viceroy's House at Delhi, dinner jackets and black ties are worn. The last occasion in fact on which I had put on a white tie was when dining with Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler in New York in 1940! Our host, Mr. Engert, realising my predicament, was good enough to don a black tie to keep me company.

In the diplomatic world of Kabul everyone speaks French, though on one occasion I found myself sitting next to a leading Afghan who appeared to be more at home in German, and was known for his Nazi sympathies. We talked in German on such safe subjects as the campaign against tuberculosis and the beauties of Kabul. In order to dissociate itself from things British the regime of Amanullah had encouraged the study of French and other continental European languages; and although there is to-day an English school, the teachers are chiefly British-Indians and Americans. The study of English will, however, inevitably increase as the result of recent events. It was curious after having travelled through the English-speaking world for three years, suddenly to find oneself linguistically in a segment of Continental Europe.

The area between the Bosphorus and the Indus will play an important part in the post-war era, and nowhere can Middle East conditions be studied more effectively than at Kabul. At every meal we met representatives of Soviet Russia, Turkey, Persia, Iraq and Egypt, and with them we discussed Turkey's future role and the relationship between Muslim North Africa and Western Asia. The emergence of a confederation between Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Persia and Afghanistan, with a British-American guarantee, was one of the solutions proposed. But before such a project comes within the range of practical politics many factors, at present unknown, will have to be taken into consideration, and among them Soviet Russia's attitude to the scheme.

The British Legation is very imposing; it is much the largest, and is situated three miles outside the town in spacious grounds, with English-looking lawns, herbaceous borders, flowering shrubs and mulberry trees, from which we picked luscious fruit. From the Legation one obtains a wonderful view of the Kabul plain and the snow-capped mountains. In the Legation Compound are the houses of the First Secretary, the Military Secretary, the Chancellery, and a large dispensary, which in normal times deals with hundreds of local patients weekly, though its activities were greatly curtailed earlier in the war as the Afghan Government feared its beneficent activities might be considered as "unneutral propaganda"! The British Minister, at the time of our visit, was genial Sir Francis Wylie, a fellow-Ulsterman who hails from Co. Tyrone, but is married

to a charming Southern Irishwoman. Sir Francis is a man of wide experience and was formerly Governor of the Central Provinces.

Ali Mahomet, the Foreign Minister, was the first prominent Afghan I met who spoke fluent English; he is a man of enlightened views and spent five and a half years as Afghan Minister in London, only returning to Kabul in 1938. He told me he felt very lonely during his first years in Great Britain, and had he left England after two years he would have returned to his native land with very different views from those he now holds. After his many contacts with Englishmen he is a firm believer in our good faith. I was convinced from my talk that he and his friends genuinely wish to work for friendship with the British Commonwealth. If Great Britain plays her cards with circumspection there is no reason why, in the course of time, a sincere relationship should not be established between our countries, based on mutual interests.

Whatever the views of individual Afghans may have been in the critical years of 1940 and 1941, when Axis propaganda was continuously proclaiming the inevitable defeat of Great Britain, the Afghan Government certainly used its influence in keeping the Frontier tribes quiet, an achievement which, on the British side of the Frontier, found its counterpart in the able handling of the situation by Sir George Cunningham, the Governor of the North-West Frontier Province. It would have been very awkward, when the Nazis were threatening Alexandria, if the North-West Frontier situation had got out of hand. The collapse of France in 1940 resulted in the loss of much of her former prestige here, as it has elsewhere in the East; but the French still exercise much influence at Kabul as a result of their cultural activities through the French School and the admirable work of the French archaeologists. Much excavation has been carried out by the latter in recent years in Afghan-Turkestan, beyond the Hindu Kush mountains and at Bagram and Jalalabad. There are still great possibilities before the excavators and Afghanistan will undoubtedly attract much attention after the war, situated as it is in the heart of Asia, where the Greco-Mediterranean, Chinese and Indian civilisations met many centuries ago.

The life of the diplomatist in a comparatively small centre like Kabul cannot be easy, as the members of the staffs of the various missions associate almost entirely with their colleagues and their families, and even in a fortnight we were constantly meeting the same people as we went from one hospitable Legation to another. A further complication exists in Kabul—it is that the representatives of the United Nations naturally do not associate with the Axis nationals. The members of the Turkish Embassy presumably have friends in both camps.

Gossip as to conditions in the Axis countries was always circulating. We heard that the Italians were very war-weary; that the Nazis, depressed by recent events in North Africa, were decidedly less confident; while the Japanese seemed quite satisfied with the way things were going. We were pointed out a Scottish woman, married to a member of the staff of the Japanese Legation, and when she met people who knew her, her lot cannot have been an easy one.

Owing to war conditions, communication with the outside world was much restricted; the only flying service in operation was maintained by the Soviet with Russian Turkestan. We received Indian newspapers, as a rule, five or six days after publication, though their arrival depended on the day of departure of the British and American Legation vans from Peshawar. Owing to the lack of petrol, all but the most essential articles were carried from Peshawar to Kabul by

camel or donkey. Shopping in Kabul was by no means easy; the ladies of the diplomatic corps looked enviously at the wife of the Egyptian Minister, whose maid was an expert *coiffeuse*, while they had to depend on a very occasional visit to the hairdresser at Peshawar.

There was, of course, no Anglican Church, as the Government does not encourage foreign worship; in normal times Roman Catholic members of the Diplomatic Corps attend Mass at the Italian Legation.

The small American colony of fourteen contained two remarkable women, Miss Nila Cook and Mrs. Anwar. The former was a journalist, forceful and full of vitality, and amazingly youthful in appearance to be the mother of a son about to join the Greek Army. Miss Cook, as a girl of sixteen, when living in Athens, married a Greek whom she subsequently divorced. She is a recent convert to Islam, speaks Greek, Turkish, Arabic, and Persian. She is enthralled by the glamour of the Middle East. She talks with fervour about the revival of religion among the young Muslims in Turkey, and wanders in the maze of Middle Eastern politics with complete assurance. Ten years ago she spent some time in the Gandhi Ashram, but to this she never referred. She is engaged on bringing out an abridged edition of the *Korân*, and was one of the few Westerners we met who could speak from personal knowledge of Afghan women. Like most converts, she is an enthusiast for everything pertaining to the faith she has adopted.

"Miss Cook" (as my diary reminds me) "had a long talk with H. about Afghan women. She has been studying the subject for eighteen months and says they are, above all, supreme 'poetesses, warrioresses, and loveresses.' She has been concentrating on their poetry, which she is translating, as she feels it reveals the soul of the Afghan woman and her attitude towards love and death. The Afghan woman apparently expects her man to die on the battlefield, or to return with his body covered with 'as many wounds as the rosebuds that she is preparing to put on his grave.' She says the men of Afghanistan do not write poetry.

"From Mrs. Anwar, a Nordic American of Swedish descent who hails from Minnesota, very attractive and in the early twenties we learnt much about current conditions. She married two years previously an Afghan student whom she met while at Columbia University, and is now teaching in the Girls' School at Kabul. We were told by her friends that when she arrived in Kabul, attempts were made to persuade her to go into purdah and adopt the *burka*<sup>1</sup>; but apparently her relatives-in-law thought it advisable not to go too far with a free-born American. The life of an Anglo-Saxon married to an orthodox Muslim can be none too easy. Mrs. Anwar is deeply interested in all problems connected with social uplift and would be an asset to any community.

"The young Afghans in the Air Force are learning to have a wholesome respect for the British; when the Rolls-Royce engineer returned to India, after a stay of five years, they gave him a wonderful send-off, and there were actually tears in the eyes of some of them. An Englishman told me that he always tries to avoid talking politics with Afghans and thinks they are not so much anti-British as pro-Afghan. On one occasion the Germans nearly succeeded in bringing off a Quisling revolution, as owing to their propaganda they had largely got the sympathy of the ruling classes. As long as Allied arms are successful, Afghanistan will be prepared to be co-operative. The country has a wholesome

<sup>1</sup> Veil.

fear of the Russians, and this tends to make the Afghans more friendly towards ourselves.

"Our spare hours—and they are not many—are spent in the delightful loggia of the American Legation, looking out on chinar trees and ailanthus, their branches waving gently against the cobalt sky. Half-a-dozen Afghans are leisurely returfing the garden with spades which must be similar to those used in Abraham's days: three inches above the iron shovel is a wooden cross-piece, as of course, barefoot men using a spade in European fashion, would hurt their feet. Although the birds here are far from being as numerous as in the Residency garden at Srinagar, we wake up to the liquid notes of the golden oriole, and occasionally get a glimpse of a flash of gold as he flies from tree to tree. From a neighbouring compound comes the braying of a friendly donkey."

It was only towards the end of our stay that we had any time for sightseeing. Kabul is a curious combination of the modern town of the Legation district and the old town near the River Kabul, with its bazaars and tumbledown baked-clay houses. "Yesterday, escorted by Thayer, First Secretary of the Legation, we went to see the bazaars; they are entirely unspoilt and remind me of Stamboul and Smyrna forty years ago. There is an attractive old wooden bridge across the river, with shops on each side like the London Bridge of the seventeenth century. The bazaars occupy a large part of the old city, and many of the streets are covered. Unlike most Oriental bazaars, here we were not badgered by the salesmen, and we wandered at will, observing that there were no other Europeans. Progress was not easy because the bazaars were crowded and we frequently had to dodge a camel, a donkey, or a coolie with a large load on his back.

"Kabul has a superb climate; its chief drawback is the prevalence of dust owing to the lack of tarred roads. Even in the Legation quarter a passing train of pack donkeys raises a cloud of dust. The method of watering the streets is somewhat primitive: rills of water run down the sides of many of the roads, where street cleaners with a wooden scoop, standing in the water, ladle it on to the roadway, but the Afghan sun is strong and the result of their work is short-lived.

"Another morning we were taken to see a marble factory. Afghanistan hopes to rival Italy in the production of beautiful marbles. We watched Italian-made machinery cutting blocks of marble as if they were butter. The manager of the factory was strongly in favour of the construction of a railroad to India with the Indian market in view; but the Government policy is still to keep Afghanistan isolated from its neighbours. The factory has only been in existence for a year and we saw every type of Central Asiatic working deftly as if to the manner born. On the way back we saw the Nazi flag flying from the German Legation; the last time we had seen the Swastika was in Danzig in August, 1939."

Amanullah was nothing if not ambitious in his plans. Probably with a hope to emulate Mussolini as a town planner, he proposed turning old-world Kabul into an imposing modern capital. With this aim in view, he built an enormous secretariat and a palace on a hill outside the town, but was compelled to abdicate before the undertaking was completed. He favoured French architecture and these two unfinished buildings which reminded me of Loire chateaux, looked quite out of place in their Eastern surroundings. The avenue to the palace is flanked on both sides by a twelve-foot hedge of sweet-smelling Persian white

roses, called Nasturan, a mass of blossom with a scent as pervading as syringa. These unfinished buildings are white elephants. King Zadir Shah has selected a wonderful site on a hill-top, on the way to Pagman, the summer capital, for his future residence. Few royal palaces can possess a more wonderful view; the gardens are being planned on lines of almost Moghul magnificence, with a formal water garden and a series of terraces.

As we were driving to the legation towards the end of our visit, we passed an elephant with a great mound of green fodder on his back, and the mahout sitting right on the top—Kabul's only elephant. The animal is over eighty years old—the only survivor out of a herd of forty elephants presented by Queen Victoria to Amir Abdur Rahman. It was a sad reminder of an age that had gone, when cordial relations existed between the British *raj* and the Amir. Let us hope that the elephant, the symbol of former British-Afghan friendship, will live to see the two countries closely allied as equals and friends.

## CHAPTER XIX

### INDIA AND THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH

WHEN THE MOMENT CAME TO LEAVE DELHI, WE WERE VERY SORRY TO SAY good-bye to our friends, Indian, American and British; we had come to the end of a chapter in our lives, in which we had learnt much. I had always heard that India casts her spell on those who try to serve her—certainly she has cast her spell on me. We had arrived when the war was going through one of its most difficult phases; we were leaving after great events, when the victory of the United Nations was no longer in doubt, and British prestige stood very high. In those dark moments in 1941-1942 we had learnt who were our real friends.

The Government of India had invited me in the summer of 1943 to carry on with my job for another year, but I felt that the need for America Relations Officer was no longer so great, and I was anxious to return to England for personal reasons. I expressed a wish to be relieved of my duties in six months' time. Being in the Indian Civil Service for a couple of years, and yet not of it, had been a great experience; during my term of office I was able to take a detached point of view. Critics of the British *raj* frequently portray the British official in India as a bureaucrat, battenning on the Indian taxpayer, and counting the days till he returns to England on a goodly pension.

This is not the picture I have taken away with me. Caroe was the I.C.S. official I knew best. He typifies for me many others high up in the service whom I have known. He cares deeply for India and its peoples, and has spent years on the North-West Frontier; he is not a person given to superlatives, but when he talks of the friendship of Indians and their qualities as hosts, he becomes eloquent. He was very fair in his criticisms of India and resented writers who came to the country and presented what he considered a one-sided or unbalanced picture, as was, in his view, Miss Mayo's *Mother India*. Though in fairness to Miss Mayo, I must say, I met many who were in substantial agreement with her presentation of the case.

Indian friends of the British *raj*, both Hindu and Muslim, complained that there was not as intimate association between Indians and British as formerly.

They said the frequent leaves in Europe taken by British officials nowadays, and the fact that they live in India with their families, has tended to make them lead a more self-contained existence. British women in India consort almost exclusively with their countrywomen, both in the plains and in the hill-stations, and but rarely get to know the women of India. Another frequent cause of estrangement was stated to be—and I heard this argument in all parts of India—the gradual expansion of the governmental machine in Delhi. The higher ranks of the I.C.S. were said to have become wedded to their desks and files; there was too much minute-writing, and not that personal contact, so essential between rulers and ruled, which happily still exists between the Deputy-Commissioner and the Indian in the *mofussil*.<sup>1</sup>

My deep conviction is that both India and Great Britain have much to contribute to our common civilisation. The West has certainly much to learn from Hindu thought, with the emphasis laid on spiritual values, for we in the West face the very real danger of being engulfed "in an all-embracing materialism." India, on her side, has undoubtedly much to learn too from Great Britain and the West.

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India is faced with many problems. The overwhelming impression that has been made on me by the pageant of India is of the hard-working tiller of the soil, sowing his crops and reaping his harvests, for a most inadequate share of the good things of this life.

Soil erosion is one of the matters to be tackled on a large scale. It is difficult to see how the general subsistence level can be raised without some form of birth control—admittedly a subject bristling with difficulties. Dr. H. P. Fairchild, Professor of Sociology in New York, when referring to the increase of 45,000,000 in India's population during the past decade, said recently even the best-developed country could not experience so great a rise without facing extreme disaster, whenever an emergency situation such as war arose.

There is also the cattle problem. India possesses more cattle per head of the population than any country in the world, but many of them are old and useless, and one of the country's greatest needs is the improvement of its breeding stock. Lord Linlithgow took the greatest interest in this matter; it was unkind of fate, owing to the war, to render impossible the application of his vast knowledge of Indian agricultural problems on as wide a scale as he had no doubt hoped. Another vital matter affecting the welfare of the peasant is the use of cattle manure as fuel and not as a fertiliser. If the social betterment of rural India is to be approached with energy these and other analogous problems will have to be dealt with on a big scale.

The temperance of India with regard to alcohol made a profound impression on me; during our travels throughout the country I never saw a drunken Indian. When I made this statement to a young Indian of modern outlook, he laughed and said, I could not have kept my eyes very wide open. The fact remains that in no Anglo-Saxon country could a visitor spend two and a half years and escape seeing drunkenness.

<sup>1</sup> Up-country.



Originally I had intended to write a chapter on the achievements of the British *raj*, for it is a story of which the Englishman can be proud, but on second thoughts it seems better that this task be left to one of non-British nationality. If India is politically conscious to-day, it is because she has drunk deep at the fount of British civilisation. India owes much to British Parliamentary experimentation and more than she realises, perhaps, to her study of English literature and English thought.

India's contribution to the war effort of the United Nations has resulted in the recruitment of 2,000,000 men on a voluntary basis, and British-led Divisions of the Indian Army have fought with distinction and bravery in the various theatres of war. Apart from the Punjab, India cannot be described as a country mobilised for war on anything approaching a totalitarian basis. Half per cent of the total population has been enrolled in the fighting services. India's industrial effort on behalf of the United Nations has been a valuable one, though the general tenor of existence continues to run its even course but little affected by the war.

The terrible famine in Bengal, attended by great suffering and much loss of life has, apart from the fighting on the Assam-Burma Front, been the one outstanding instance of the war coming very close to India. In normal times the country is almost completely self-sufficing in food grains; the tragic food shortage and famine were due to loss of confidence owing to the Japanese approach to the borders of India, which caused producers to hold back more of their crops than usual. The interruption of the main supply route and the lack of transport, owing to war conditions, and the tendency to deal with the problem locally and not on an all-India basis, were contributing factors. During our last week in Delhi we lunched with the new Viceroy and Lady Wavell, who had just returned from one of their tours of investigation in the famine area; from them we heard of some of the heart-breaking scenes they had witnessed. Undoubtedly the Viceroy's promptness in going and seeing things for himself was making a very favourable impression.

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What of the future of Indo-British relations? Despite the bitter things said on both sides, India and Great Britain, after nearly three centuries of association, have a great role to play as partners in establishing stable conditions in Asia. The British Commonwealth has achieved the impossible in reconciling local autonomy and co-operation: It has provided the white sister-nations with opportunities of self-realisation and free institutions, but a great moment in its history has arrived. It is about to demonstrate that communities of other racial stocks can also enjoy complete equality and freedom within its beneficent orbit.

The British electorate stands, I am convinced, by the Cripps proposals; the offer was a fair one and many Indians realise now that a mistake was made when they were turned down. There may have to be alterations to make the proposals acceptable to the two great minorities, the Muslims, and the Scheduled Castes. In substance Britain said to India—or the Indians: "You shall have the same political status that we have, and if, after you have tried it, you wish to withdraw from the British Commonwealth, you shall be at liberty to do so."

The history of the United States and the British Dominions has shown that

strong and enduring federations are not created in a moment. The essential fact that emerges after two world-wars is that no nation can stand alone. The United States is regarded by some as the one nation powerful enough to rely on its own strength, yet a former presidential candidate said to me, in America, in 1938: "My country, for all its remoteness from Europe, its vast resources and its wealth, must have partners in a world dominated by brute force." If that is true of the United States to-day, it is certainly true of India.

It will be many a long day before India is in a position to defend herself against external aggression on the sea, in the air and on land. If Great Britain were to withdraw, some other Power would certainly take her place. As a free and equal partner within the British Commonwealth, which, presumably, will be acting in close association with the United States and the other United Nations, India should have full scope for unhampered political development. It is, of course, never safe to make prophecies as far as the United States is concerned, some new apostle of Isolationism may arise and sweep all before him; but undoubtedly the interdependence of the modern world and the need for American participation were never more widely realised.

The complete lack of unity in India is the fundamental factor that must be faced. Hindu and Muslim, with their distinct ideologies, differ as oil from water. Reliance on India's geographical unity will not get us far. Geography has not made Ireland one; neither has it united Spain and Portugal or Norway and Sweden. North America is not one, nor is South America, with its infinitely greater centripetal tendencies. Despite its common Faith—the Roman Catholic religion—and despite a common language (for South America is Spanish-speaking, except for Brazil) South America is not united. The factors that create unity are, rather, historical and psychological.

The experience of the English-speaking world in fashioning successful federations should be borne in mind by the framers of India's constitution. The attempt to create a strong central government, under existing conditions, is destined to fail. The experience gained by the United States, Canada, Australia, and South Africa, shows that it is necessary to lay sound foundations before attempting to build a lasting structure. The thirteen colonies of the United States, the Provinces in Canada and South Africa, and the States in Australia, were practised in the art of local government before federation was attempted. India's greatest need is immediately to establish provincial government over the widest possible area, removing thereby the sense of grievance nurtured by her largest minority, the Muslims.

The second largest minority, the Scheduled Castes (also called Untouchables or Depressed Classes) is widely scattered. No Pakistan is possible for them, but their leader is determined to escape from Hindu domination. Till they are better organised politically they will not wield the influence to which, as the second largest minority, they are entitled. The Scheduled Castes are one of India's greatest problems and India, as a whole, must shoulder the responsibility for their betterment. Large sums of money will have to be devoted to their higher education and there is need for the establishment of colonies for members of the Scheduled Castes on territory made specially available for the purpose.

It is extremely doubtful whether world unity will be the outcome of this war. Our experiences in 1918 ought to have taught us that lesson. Local self-government should be immediately introduced, apart from the reserved

subjects of foreign policy, defence and economics, and the country safeguarded from external aggression by the Royal Indian Navy, the Indian Army and the Royal Indian Air Force, and by the Forces of the British Commonwealth.

The real obstacle to the successful evolution of a workable constitution is the fear complex of the minorities. Muslims fear Hindus, Untouchables fear Hindus, Sikhs fear Muslims, and Hindu minorities fear Muslim predominance in North-West India. This fear complex must be removed. Dominion status should be granted to North-West India, with its Muslim majority of 65 per cent, and presumably to any other territory with a definite Muslim majority. Critics say that Pakistan cannot succeed because of Muslim lack of experience in finance, industry and commerce. So important a country as the proposed Muslim State, stretching from the mouth of the Persian Gulf to the frontiers of Hindu India, should without difficulty be able to obtain the requisite capital and experience for its development.

The Sikh problem is a difficult one, as, even in the holy city of Amritsar, the Sikhs form less than 20 per cent of the population; failing agreement between the Muslims and the Sikhs, the only solution would seem to be the establishment of Sikhestan—an enclave within the Punjab.

The self-governing provinces in British India, with a Hindu majority would probably unite. Hindustan, thus formed, would be the second largest country in the world. There is nothing sacrosanct about provincial boundaries, but adjustments would have to wait till after the war.

I have made no attempt to deal with the question of the future of the Indian States, a matter that would require a volume to itself. The 560 States vary in size from Hyderabad, as large as England, to territories no larger than a county estate in Great Britain. The leading States will probably become Dominions under the British Crown, but there will have to be some geographical grouping of the smaller States incapable of standing alone.

The goal of an ultimate Indian confederation has not been overlooked. Once local autonomy has been achieved, every effort to stimulate co-operation between the free States of the Indian sub-continent must be encouraged. An all-India Advisory Council should be established to deal with matters of common concern, such as transport, communications, health and hygiene, plague, drought and locusts.

## PART THREE

### CHAPTER I

#### CONVOY TO MIDDLE EAST

WE SPENT NEARLY A MONTH AT THE INDIAN PORT OF DEPARTURE; IT WAS A PERIOD of hiatus; we had said good-bye to "our" India. I was no longer a cog in the official machine—we were mere birds of passage.

These weeks of waiting for the convoy proved a godsend. They enabled me to write much of the Indian section of this book; my wife typed from early morning till late at night. Every Wednesday I used to go round to the Embarkation Authorities to receive instructions as to the date of our departure; it was always a case of "Come back next week." We began to wonder whether we should ever start. The hôtel was seething with humanity—Indians, Americans and British; rupees were flying, there were evidently many well-paid jobs behind the line. At the week-end sleep was difficult as roysterers in the street below kept up their jollifications till the small hours of the morning.

We were depressed by some of the things we saw and heard, inevitable in a great seaport, especially in war-time. We might have carried away a wrong impression had it not been for the Easter week-end. We had never, in all our wanderings, attended a church so packed; in the huge building there was not an empty seat for the Early Celebration on Easter morning; we had to queue up in a seemingly endless procession. The congregation consisted of British soldiers, sailors, airmen, the crew of a submarine, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians, and members of a Greek warship in port. Despite the fact that Celebration took place at two altars, the service lasted two hours. It was a wonderful parting memory of a virile Christianity.

From the windows of the room in which we worked I could watch the latest type of vessels, some of them to me quite unfamiliar—merchantmen from around the Seven Seas, dhows and small craft. At sundown we would go and sit in a garden that ran down to the water's edge. We never tired of watching the local fishermen in their gently rocking little boats; they lived in a world of their own and carried on with their ordinary life as if there had been no war. They would squat endlessly polishing the fittings and scrubbing the decks; it was curious that in a port where the teeming masses lived so unhygienically the fishermen took such pride in their boats. They laughed and exchanged experiences with their neighbours afloat; they were always busy, either mending their sails or cooking their evening meals, and savoury smells would be wafted to the shore.

Nearby devout Parsis, the men in shining black hats and in office clothes, their womenfolk in dainty many-coloured robes and ornate slippers, riveted our attention. They walked down a slippery ramp to the water's edge, where perhaps a sudden wave would wet their feet. They were entirely oblivious to their surroundings and looked out to sea, concentrating on their sundown orisons.

There was a prescribed rite which they carefully observed—tying and untying their girdles, dipping their hands in the sea and then touching their foreheads and scattering blossoms of blessing on the face of the waters. They cracked large coconuts and poured the milk on the lapping waves. This picture of devout Parsis worshipping the Eternal, through the elements, and placing religion in the forefront of their daily lives is something that we shall never forget.

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When the day of departure came, 5,000 passengers surged on board H.M. Troopship Blank, including a large contingent of Italian prisoners of war. We expected to be on the high seas next day; in fact, we spent four days waiting in harbour, cut off from the land, without even daily newspapers. Though what harm it would have done the national war effort for us to have been supplied with them I have to this day never understood.

We were a cross-section of humanity. Sailors, soldiers and airmen going home after half-a-dozen years in the East, retired officials and torpedoed officers and men in the Merchant Navy, who would doubtless soon again be at sea. We thought with great pride of the Merchant Navy. It has taken two world wars to make the Empire realise what it owes to its members. In the world for heroes which we hope to build after the war there should be improved status and conditions of employment for them.

On arrival in Egypt we were amused by receiving letters from home expressing the hope that the journey had "rested and refreshed" us. Absorbingly interesting it undoubtedly was, but an overcrowded troopship in a war-time convoy does not provide rest and refreshment. We were packed like sardines, and the decks resembled the beaches at Brighton or Blackpool at holiday time, but everyone took the minor unpleasantnesses of life in good part.

The days were full of duties and we were much impressed by the thoroughness of the organisation. The O.C. Troops was a schoolfellow, and I was very proud of the old school tie; how well he did his job we fully appreciated only by comparison on the second stage of our journey through the Mediterranean on another troopship. He believed that Satan finds mischief still for idle hands to do and was therefore determined to keep us busy. Even the children were included in his plans, much to the relief of their hard-worked mothers, and of the rest of us. Every day voluntary teachers provided well-thought-out lessons from nine till eleven to which the children looked forward. For the grown-ups there were talks, discussions, brains trusts, lectures, physical jerks, sports and entertainments of every kind—we were almost a floating university. Passengers, first- and second-class alike, had an impressive syllabus to choose from.

From the moment we anchored in the harbour, waiting to sail, our drills began. Some of the lifeboats were captained by officers who had themselves been torpedoed, and they gave practical advice which would have proved very useful in an emergency. One of them had been torpedoed three times, but he could only rarely be induced to talk of his experiences. On the third day on board when we were assembled at our boat stations, we were told that we were to be lowered in the actual lifeboat to which we were allocated. We were a motley crowd, and sixteen of us were detailed to do the rowing; it was a good idea to make us familiar with the boat and what was expected of us. We rowed

slowly round our troopship. There was a mother in our lifeboat with a family of five, who had said she preferred to have "all her eggs in one boat." As she had the baby to look after, each of the remaining four children was put in charge of a separate grown-up.

On the first night out we heard in the B.B.C. bulletin that U-boats were round Socotra, near the bottle-neck into the Red Sea, through which all shipping must pass, and we were glad to hear that one of them had been destroyed. At drills we were asked to put on the actual clothes that we intended to wear in an emergency, and when we went to bed we placed them beside our bunk, together with a satchel with essentials and emergency food rations. We were instructed to practise dressing in the dark, as the old-timers emphasised the fact that if the ship were struck all the lights would be automatically switched off.

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Back in Egypt after ten years.

The Suez Canal looked strangely empty though there was great activity in the port at both ends, and the Forces of the British Commonwealth were much in evidence. Our first contact with Egyptian officialdom was friendly. We possessed a somewhat alarming quantity of baggage—necessary for four years' travel in every climate and due to gradual accumulations—the Government of India had solicitously provided an imposing document headed with the Royal Arms, vouching for my *bona fides*. This document worked wonders with the *douanier*, and we were invited into the Superintendent's room to be given excellent Turkish coffee and cigarettes.

Our first good impression, alas, did not endure for long; there were endless discussions and bargainings and a clamour for *baksheesh* to be faced before we obtained a car at an exorbitant price to convey us to Cairo, 100 miles away. At the dock where we arrived, supplies for El Alamein had been unloaded, and on the drive we passed processions of military lorries that brought back to our minds pictures from the illustrated papers preceding the Eighth Army's offensive.

We were in the desert; hundreds of miles of sand-dunes and again more sand-dunes on all sides; every now and then we passed R.A.F. camps, motor transport stores, or depots of old junk of every kind, within barbed wire enclosures. As we sped along the admirable road the merciless desert sun beat down on us, and always straight ahead of us was a shimmering mirage. Those who sometimes talk lightly of the easy life of the men in the Middle East Force should spend a few days in the desert; it was an existence of incredible monotony, of burning sun from morning to night, of sand and flies and dust storms.

In one direction there had been no change in the last ten years. The Egyptian fly can still hold its own against all comers. Flies in most parts of the world are friendly in comparison and easily dealt with, but the Egyptian fly is Nazi in its readiness to return to the assault. It delights in attacking the stranger. As you mop your damp brow it crawls into your hair, settles on your lips or ears, and has a special predilection for eyelids. All day long you fight a losing battle with it, and darkness alone brings relief.

We felt almost ashamed of the comfort of the Mena House Hotel, situated at the foot of the Pyramids, when we thought of our men in those camps in the desert; the crisp white rolls of peace-time had gone, there were meatless days,

but there was ample fare. At week-ends we were glad to see the crowds of British soldiers, airmen, and members of the Women's Corps enjoying the fleshpots of Egypt. Dinner was served out of doors by the swimming-pool, on small tables with coloured lamps and gay with flowers. We sat watching the reflections in the water while searchlights swept the sky.

To the casual observer Cairo looked more prosperous than ever; business was booming and prices and profits were soaring. Our Egyptian Allies were having the time of their lives. All that was needed was a world-war every twenty-five years, with the British Empire on the winning side, and the cosmopolitan business community would be content.

No one had ever told me that May was the time to visit Cairo, when the Poinziana regia is at its best. In the residential quarters along the banks of the Nile, one can wander endlessly and look up through a canopy of scarlet at the blue heavens.

The British Residency, now the British Embassy, is much the same as it was in 1934, except that many of its satellite activities have spread into some of the adjoining buildings. Lord Killearn still presides over its destiny, as he did ten years ago. In this rocking world there can be few diplomats who have occupied so vital a post for so long. He will have an interesting story to tell, if he ever records his experiences, of the anxious weeks in 1941 and 1942 when the British community lived with suitcases ready packed. After the fall of Tobruk anything seemed possible. Montgomery, from what we heard locally, was not appointed a moment too soon.

One of our happiest memories in Cairo is of a talk with the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Bernard Paget, who dined with us by the swimming-pool on our last evening. He is a real enthusiast for all that pertains to the well-being of the troops under his command. He must often run up against hard-hearted Treasury officials who do not, like him, regard the provision of better amenities and comfortable barracks for the men as matters of supreme importance. Alas, much remains to be done before the British other ranks have anything comparable in the way of accommodation to that which the American Enlisted Men take as a matter of course.

## CHAPTER II

### THE HOLY LAND

MY LAST VISIT TO PALESTINE HAD BEEN IN 1934. IN VIEW OF THE EVENTS OF recent years, I was anxious to study again, on the spot, the incredibly difficult problem of Arab-Jew relations before returning home.

The best way of going from Cairo to Jerusalem is by air. The Egyptian-owned Misr Air Line had only just been started at the time of my former visit; to-day it has direct services from Cairo to Damascus, Beyrout, Cyprus and Palestine. The only place of call is Port Said, which from the air looks as if it were floating on the water—there seemed no reason why it should not suddenly submerge. The journey is monotonous as far as the frontier of Palestine. From the air one looks down on an unending desert, flanked by a black thread, the military highway, and then the white line caused by the waves breaking on the

seashore. Soon after crossing into Palestine I noticed a great change compared with 1934. The country was like a vast chessboard, dark green patches of neatly planted groves of citrus trees surrounded by sand.

The air port for Jerusalem is now at Lydda; one drives to the Holy City through a land "flowing with milk and honey"—vineyards and orange groves, backed by terraced hills, with olives and cypress trees. On the journey we passed many motor lorries loaded with oranges, a sight that would have been welcome in war-time England; oranges were also dumped down in heaps by the roadside. One of Palestine's recent problems had been the over-production of its major crop, for owing to the lack of packing-cases and shipping there was no means of exporting the surplus. The country was going through hard times in 1939 when the war solved many of its economic problems. The demands of the Middle East Force were great, and farmers and industrialists in Palestine have been experiencing a period of great prosperity. The switch-over to peace-time conditions, as elsewhere, will be none too easy.

At the time of my former visit the hotels were packed with tourists, and my first impression of staying at Jerusalem was of watching a cosmopolitan crowd of sightseers jazzing at a *thé dansant*. It took me several days to get over that jarring first impact. On that occasion I vowed that when next I came I would keep away from the quarter frequented by tourists. Fate was kind, or rather the High Commissioner and Lady MacMichael were good enough to ask us to spend our first days with them.

Government House, Jerusalem, has a very wonderful site. From our bedroom window we could watch the sun rise over the hills of Judaea and gradually light up the path from Bethany to the Mount of Olives. Almost due north, across a valley, were the amber walls of the Old City, and the Dome of the Rock on the site of Solomon's Temple.

Our kind hosts understood our desire to spend every spare moment in the garden. It was an imaginative act on the part of the British Government to purchase a bare and rocky mountain and turn it into so delectable a residence, for the High Commissioner. The property merges into the surrounding countryside. From an easterly hill-top one can look across the wilderness of Judaea to the mountains of Moab and of Trans-Jordan. Government House is built of the cream-coloured stone out of which many of Jerusalem's modern buildings are fashioned. The architect, Mr. A. St. B. Harrison, has been appointed to deal with the reconstruction of Malta.

I recalled having been taken over the hillside by Sir Arthur Wauchope ten years ago, and listening to him explaining his plans for the future of the estate. In the interval a miracle had been wrought—thanks to the care bestowed on it by Sir Arthur and by Sir Harold and Lady MacMichael the hill-top of barren soil and rocky shrub had been transformed into a place of wonder. From small lawns cut out of the hillside at many levels, one can get ever-differing and ever-enchanting views of Jerusalem. Tall hollyhocks indigenous to the country abound; across a foreground of pomegranates covered with scarlet blossom, clinging passion-flower and morning glory, one gazes on unforgettable views. There were paths of flagstones bordered by lavender and rosemary. In key positions cypresses stood sentinel.

On 6th June, just after breakfast, Sir Harold came to tell us that the Second Front had started—ever since August, 1943, we had been awaiting this moment.



Curiously enough, two days before we left Cairo the previous week, a well-informed recent arrival from England asserted there would be no Second Front, and added that it was one of the greatest bluffs in history, a master-stroke in making the Germans believe it was coming at any moment, thereby tethering large numbers of the enemy to the Atlantic wall.

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We spent three weeks in the old-world atmosphere of the American Colony, a group of buildings in one of the still unspoilt suburbs of Jerusalem, half a mile from the Damascus Gate. From our vaulted room, cool even on the hottest day, one looked on to a little Mosque and a field of ripening corn, with a threshing-floor beyond; there from early morning the mules were treading out the corn. Beyond the threshing-floor was a grove of ancient olive trees against a background of red earth. There was a narrow path on which peasant women carried to market large baskets of vegetables balanced on their heads, and the local milkmen started forth on their daily rounds, sitting high on the shoulders of their donkeys with milk-cans in coloured panniers on either side.

The American Colony is but a short distance from the Garden Tomb. In the Guide Book it is referred to as "Gordon's Calvary." When the General was in Palestine sixty years ago in connection with the work of the Palestine Exploration Fund, he claimed, after careful investigation, that the Garden Tomb was the real site of the Holy Sepulchre—a theory first advanced by German archæologists in the seventeenth century. The site belongs to a British trust and is looked after by a civil servant from Malaya, whose custodianship of the garden is a labour of love. He gave us convincing reasons for the belief that this is the real Sepulchre and demonstrated how the tomb and the surroundings tally in every detail with the accounts in the four Gospels. Visitors to Jerusalem should on no account miss this peaceful oasis.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is exactly as it has been described by Mr. H. V. Morton. It is all that the most sacred shrine of Christendom should not be, with its crowds of sightseers, guides shouting parrot-like descriptions of things too sacred to be put into words, and all around shops and booths doing a roaring trade in souvenirs.

Those three weeks in Jerusalem are a wonderful memory. We often walked round the City walls, from Herod's Gate to Jaffa Gate, away from the tourists; we wandered at will in the Muslim cemetery with its picturesque old tombs, agaves and cactus. We had the place to ourselves save for a gardener, a goat herd, or perhaps Muslims visiting graves of relatives. We spent many hours on the slopes of Mount Moriah, looking down on the Valley of Kedron, the Garden of Gethsemane and the groves climbing up the Mount of Olives. We stepped back 2,000 years.

We usually had two or three talks every day with Arab or Jew friends; curiously enough, we were escorted on the Sabbath by an Arab friend to the Wailing Wall, where we saw that incredible and deeply moving spectacle of Jews, of all ages, standing, their faces to the wall of Solomon's Temple, lifting their voices in lamentation. The tragedies of the last decade in Europe added poignancy to the scene.

We motored from Jerusalem to Safad.

There is much in favour of the suggestion that those visiting Palestine for the first time should go straight to Galilee—before going to Jerusalem—and steep themselves in that wonderful and unspoilt countryside which is so dominated by Christ's Personality. Every time one lifts one's eyes they rest on some hill or scene interwoven in our Lord's life.

The Sea of Galilee constantly changes its colour, but I shall always remember it as I first saw it from about five miles away, on the drive from Nazareth—turquoise-blue in a setting of pale-mauve ethereal mountains. From the road northwards through Tiberias to Capernaum, within a few miles, one's eyes can rest on the hill of the Sermon on the Mount, the hill of the feeding the multitudes with the loaves and fishes, and the mountain side down which rushed the Gadarene swine.

For a week we stayed on a hill-top above Safad and watched the Sea of Galilee from sunrise to sunset, and wandered to our hearts content on the rocky mountains blue with amethyst eryngo in late June.

### CHAPTER III

#### ARAB AND JEW

"Of all the knotty problems which confront the British Commonwealth, there can be few more difficult than that of Palestine. . . . How can we do justice to both Arab and Jew in view of past pledges, for much of our trouble is due to the fact that, during the war, we made two distinct sets of promises, and ever since we have been trying to reconcile two sets of obligations?" (Article in the *Spectator*, 27th April, 1934.)

THE WORDS, QUOTED ABOVE, TAKEN FROM AN ARTICLE I WROTE IN THE *Spectator* on my return from Palestine ten years ago, would almost serve as the opening paragraph of the present chapter. But the breach between Arab and Jew has deepened in the interval and each side is even more unyielding. During the intervening ten years, the Arab population has increased from 800,000 to 1,000,000, and that of the Jewish community has more than doubled. In 1934 there were 275,000 Jews in the country, to-day they number over 570,000. Statements made to me in 1934 by leading Arabs as to the absorptive capacity of the country have proved to be incorrect; I was also told that further Jewish settlement would inevitably result in much permanent unemployment.

In the following conspectus I am trying to present the Arab and Jewish points of view, based on many talks. I met leading Arab politicians, professional men, and young intellectuals. Owing to my inability to speak Arabic, I was not able to obtain the views of the fellahin at first hand. A knowledge of German, however, enabled me to talk with Jewish farmers, shopkeepers and working men; to that extent I had greater facilities for arriving at an estimate of the Jewish case. Nevertheless, I think I have obtained a fair picture and was able to check the information received from various sources, with friends among the British officials. At almost every interview I asked both Arab and Jew how he would answer the arguments of the opposite side.

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The Arab case is somewhat as follows: After victory Great Britain and the United Nations will be in a position to impose on Palestine the form of

government they deem necessary; a small country such as Palestine is not in a position to demur, though whether an enforced settlement of this nature will prevent future civil strife is open to doubt. During the days of the Ottoman Empire—broken up as the result of the first Great War—the Arab countries of Syria, Trans-Jordan, the Lebanon and Palestine, were one country, called "Barr Eshsham." The British victories of 1917-18 and the terms of the peace settlement, in effect balkanised the Eastern Mediterranean seaboard, and severed adjoining Arab territories. It is incorrect to say that King Feisul agreed to a National Home for the Jews under existing conditions; his assent was based on the assumption that Palestine and Syria would remain united. No nation, or group of nations, however powerful, had the right to disrupt these Arab lands merely to suit Franco-British convenience, as was the case in 1918.

In the good old days, by which is meant the period under the Ottoman regime, many Arabs maintained there was no bitterness between Arab and Jew. For instance, Musa Bey Alami, to illustrate the fraternisation that then took place, gave the following example: "Before 1917, the 70,000 Jews mixed, and even intermarried with the Arabs. Every Arab baby-boy was exchanged for a period of a few weeks with a neighbouring Jewish baby-boy; the babies were nursed by their respective foster-mothers." Musa Bey Alami then dramatically added: "You see, I have Jewish milk within me."

From the Arab standpoint, not only was their country unnaturally divided after the first Great War, but an alien race was introduced. They deny that they have any racial affinity with the Jews. As an illustration of the extent to which they regard the Jew as a complete foreigner, the following views of a young Arab intellectual will serve:

"Owing to the British pro-Jewish policy, 99 per cent of the Arabs are pro-Axis.<sup>1</sup> What would Australia say if she were suddenly told she must admit four or five million Japanese settlers; that is the position of the Arabs in Palestine. We have no more in common with the Jewish race than the Australians have with the Japanese."

The Balfour Declaration is regarded as an astute British move in 1917, when Great Britain wanted to curry favour with influential members of the Jewish Community in the United States, at a time when American financial aid was of the utmost importance to her. The findings of the Royal Commission, whose Report was published in 1936, is from the Arab point of view no longer regarded as valid. Their hopes are now centred on the White Paper of 1939, which they regard as "even more binding than the Balfour Declaration."

Taking the White Paper as the basis of discussion, they are prepared to abide by its terms and enter into a treaty with the British Commonwealth based on its recommendations. They recognise British special interests in the Middle East, namely, the safeguarding of oil supplies in times of war and the keeping open of Imperial communications. Arab-controlled Palestine would be ready to lease a naval port and suitable air-bases to the British Commonwealth. But such an arrangement, from the Arab standpoint, assumes the rescinding of the Balfour Declaration and the cessation of Jewish immigration. Some Arabs said they would be ready to accept the present ratio of the Jews in Palestine—approximately

<sup>1</sup> His colleagues, however, demurred and said this was an exaggeration; after some discussion they agreed that it would be safe to assume that 75 per cent of the Arabs had been pro-Axis prior to the recent British victories.

one-third of the population—as the basis of agreement. Should the Jewish ratio decline, owing to the greater fecundity of Arab mothers, they would be prepared to admit an agreed number of settlers annually so that the Jewish ratio should be preserved.

Once the hated Balfour Declaration has been cancelled, and the British Government has seen the error of its ways, one section of opinion appeared to be ready to accept Dominion status. As far as I could judge, however, the Arabs in Syria and the Lebanon,<sup>1</sup> with the example of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Iraq before them, look forward to a complete independence within some sort of Arab federation. At several of these discussions there was a sense of unreality as the growth of Soviet influence in Western Asia, resulting from Russian victories, appeared to have been overlooked; the views expressed were based on the conditions that had existed after the last war. In the Lebanon, however, I met several Arabs, one of whom was connected with the University at Beyrout, who talked of the possibility, in the event of Great Britain refusing to give up her pro-Jewish policy, of Arab republics being set up in the Middle East with Soviet backing.

For the most part, nevertheless, the Arabs appeared to hope for a settlement with the British, for whom, despite much that has happened, they have a genuine admiration—subject to the proviso that Great Britain accepts the Arab point of view. Once the menace of Zionism is removed, they would be ready to enter into an alliance with the British Commonwealth. The United States is no longer so popular in the Middle East as formerly, owing to the espousal of Zionism by the Washington Administration. The Arab world would certainly prefer close association with the British Lion to any with the Russian Bear. Disturbing rumours from Persia as to Russia's future intentions were percolating through the bazaars.

I inquired whether they had any proposals to put forward likely to be acceptable to moderate Jews, but the usual reply was to the effect that a *sine qua non* was the discarding of Zionism once for all. 'If in practice the Arabs find the Jews are ready to become good Palestinians and to work for the welfare of the Palestinian State, they will be only too ready to grant them equality of status, and even possibly will be ready to consider the question of admitting further Jewish immigrants, so they said.

Dr. Husein Fakhiri Bey Khalidi, a leading Arab, is entirely opposed to the industrialisation of Palestine. Why should the beautiful hills and valleys of the Holy Land be desecrated, he asked with fervour. Western civilisation, as exemplified by Tel Aviv, the thriving Jewish town with 150,000 inhabitants, built on a site which twenty-five years before was wind-swept sand-dunes, was anathema to him.

The advantageous position occupied by the Jews, because of the widespread ramifications of world Jewry, which enables the Jews to make the best of both worlds, was referred to by the Arabs with bitterness. While Zionists were intent on establishing a Jewish nation in Palestine, hundreds of thousands of Jews throughout the world had every intention of remaining in the country wherein they dwelt. This dual role gave them an unfair advantage over the Arabs as they had channels of propaganda at their disposal for the presentation of their case.

<sup>1</sup> Although the situation in the Lebanon is further complicated by reason of the fact that many of the Lebanese are Arab-Christians. The issue is not therefore clear-cut.

An intelligent young Arab with a European background, while agreeing that Jewish immigration must cease, thought Great Britain, having once made up her mind on her course of action, should impose a settlement on the country; although, whatever the terms, both sides would certainly criticise her. Even if the Jews had Palestine, it would not solve the Jewish question, he said, because the country could not absorb more than a further half a million Jews. What the Jews needed was a territory where all Jews could find a home.

A group of young Arabs with progressive views admitted all was not well with the Arabs, but they were determined to improve conditions, and asked that the Arabs be given twenty years to find their feet. After criticising the British pro-Zionist policy, they declared their readiness to co-operate, provided the British Commonwealth cancelled the Balfour Declaration. They said that the British administration in Palestine was superior to that of the French in Syria, and as a result many Arabs from the surrounding countries had come to Palestine. From the few impartial persons I met there was a readiness to acknowledge the excellent work Great Britain had performed under the Mandate during the past quarter of a century.

If a Jewish administration were set up in Western Palestine the strategic unity of the Arab world would be split, for what happened in Palestine was of supreme importance to the neighbouring States. Many Arabs admitted that Jewish achievements undoubtedly were having a profound influence in stimulating among some of their countrymen a spirit of emulation. Two Arab banks were now firmly established and the National Arab Fund (*Samdouk al Umma*) for saving Arab peasant-land from being acquired by Jews, was receiving strong support. I was repeatedly told that the Jews had made no effort to bring the Arabs into partnership in the management of their industrial concerns.

When I inquired whether there was any concrete Arab plan for the development of Palestine, I received but vague answers, and the conversation was usually directed into other channels. There was a general feeling that Great Britain had done but little to improve the condition of the 200,000 Bedouins in the country, and another grievance was that of the thousand Arabs who had been dispossessed of their land as the result of Jewish purchases. It was unfair on the part of Great Britain, they said, to have opened the gates to Jewish immigrants, many of whom possessed a Western education, and to have done so little for the social betterment of the poorer Arab.

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To turn to the Jewish point of view. There was no difficulty in obtaining information from Jewish sources. The Jewish Agency is extremely well organised and the Jews are past-masters at presenting their case. We met many of the leading Jews, visited several of their very impressive settlements, literally from Dan to Beersheba, and talked with many of the Jewish intellectuals connected with the Hebrew University at Jerusalem, and other institutions. Mr. D. Ben Gurion, the Chairman of the Jewish Agency, is a Russian-born Jew who came to Palestine in 1906, was imprisoned by the Turks and expelled from the country; he was told that he would never be permitted to return, but vowed that he would come back to Zion. As one of the 3,000 Jewish soldiers under Allenby, he achieved his object. He is on fire with the faith within him as to

the great part which the Jewish State of Palestine is destined to play. All those associated with the work of the Jewish Agency are convinced that nothing can stop Jewry in its work for the regeneration of Zion. The fundamental tenet of their faith is that Judaism has made a great contribution to the world and has even a greater contribution to make. They do not deny that the Arab has a case, but the Palestinian Arabs must accept the inevitable and console themselves with the knowledge that their co-religionists are in a majority in the surrounding countries. The Jewish case is based on necessity: the persecution of the Jews in Europe by the Nazis has turned the idealistic conception of the National Home in Palestine into a matter of life and death.

There are 27,000,000 *dunams* in Palestine, and 7,000,000 are already cultivated. The Arabs say the balance cannot be cultivated, to which the Jews reply: "Give us the remaining 20,000,000 *dunams* and we will show you what we can do with them." The question of the ownership of land is of supreme importance to the Jews. "We have no other country," they say; "Palestine means everything to us. We are attached to Zion in a way few people are attached to their homelands. We realise that the Arabs are also children of this country, and are willing that they shall have civil liberty and all the privileges of citizenship. The deciding factor, however, must be, as the Arabs have not made use of the soil, the Jews must be given an opportunity to show what they can accomplish; but we know we are not likely to convince any Palestinian Arab with this argument."

Dr. Cohen, Political Secretary of the Jewish Agency, is a very able exponent of the Jewish case, with a wide knowledge of international problems. General Smuts, before the Treaty of Versailles, had urged the need of creating machinery to enable frontiers to be changed without war, Dr. Cohen pointed out; this, according to him, was just where the League of Nations failed. Zionism is an example of a new conception of international law. According to the Jews it takes the place of the former slogan, "What I have I hold, no matter what I do with it." They maintain that Zionism represents the *dynamic* conception of international law as opposed to the *static*. Their claims are based on this conception of dynamic morality which has become one of their fundamental beliefs.

Palestine represents less than 2 per cent of the total area in the Middle East under Arab control. The Arabs have Mecca and Medina as their religious shrines. It is unreasonable to deny to the Jew his right to return to, and spend himself for, the land of his fathers. Jewish immigration to Palestine had done three things whereby the Arabs had benefited. It has provided producers with local markets, it has shown what up-to-date methods of farming can achieve, it has stimulated a spirit of emulation. Before the arrival of the Jewish settlers, Arab landowners had been eking out a parlous existence on the soil, owing to antiquated methods and lack of capital. By selling a quarter of their territory to the Jews, Arab farmers have been enabled to buy much-needed machinery, fertilisers, and live-stock.

Opinions differ as to the absorptive capacity of the country, but most Jews appear to think that Palestine can provide a living for at least two or three million more settlers. A prosperous and industrialised Palestine would be a gain to the whole Middle East. The Arabs in Palestine would be assured of a fair deal for the very good reason that the Palestinian State would largely depend for its markets upon the goodwill of its neighbours. Members of the Jewish Agency claim that ten years ago there was considerable Arab goodwill for Jewish

aspirations in return for the backing of the cause of Arab unity by the Jews throughout the world.

At the conclusion of his talk Mr. Ben Gurion said: "Once Palestine is a free country, Jews from all parts of the world will come and live a full, free, and useful life here. There will, of course, be a certain section of Jews who will remain citizens of the countries in which they reside, but the great majority will, I think, throw in their lot with the Palestinian State." When I repeated to him the remark of an Arab friend, that the settlement of 500,000, or even 1,000,000, Jews in Palestine, would not solve the Jewish problem, he smiled and said: "That is our concern."

The Jews do not take seriously the argument used by some Arabs, that they are an alien race in Palestine, or that their connection with Zion is only an historic episode 3,000 years ago. Those who wish to study the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine have much material to draw on, and the grounds for recognising their claims were fully admitted in the preamble to the Mandate. They can certainly point to a succession of prophecies linking them with the Promised Land from the days of Abraham.<sup>1</sup>

The Jewish Agency has a special Arab Department and was, I was told, seeking to improve Arab-Jew relations. Courses in Arabic have been started and an effort has been made to explain Arab customs and prejudices to the Jews; a weekly paper in Arabic is published by them and the Hebrew University at Jerusalem possesses the best Arabic Department in the Middle East. A leading Jew thus summed up his views: "We are deeply interested in good relations with the Arabs; we cannot live without Arab support."

The idea of establishing a Middle East Union similar to the American Pan-American Union, with headquarters in Jerusalem, was referred to by Dr. Cohen. Its services would include economic planning in Palestine, Trans-Jordan, Syria and Iraq, and it should be endowed with funds to forward irrigation projects, stimulate production, and loan tractors and machinery, and in general promote the interests of Jew and Arab alike.

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Dr. J. L. Magnes, the California-born President of the Hebrew University at Jerusalem, was one of the few moderate men we met on either side. His mind is free of prejudice and he does not regard Palestine as either an Arab or a Jewish State; he is thinking in terms of equal status for Arab and Jew, though apparently he represents but a small number of his co-religionists. "The problem is primarily," he said, "how to give the Jews the opportunity of a large immigration, and simultaneously to remove from the Arabs the fear of being dominated by a large influx of settlers. A satisfactory solution for our time can, in my view, be founded upon the basis of political and numerical parity between the Arabs and the Jews in a bi-national Palestine, to be part of a larger union. As to Jewish immigration, parity would mean another 500,000 Jews to be introduced into Palestine, as the present population of Arabs is about 1,000,000. The tempo of this Jewish immigration would depend upon the economic absorptive capacity of the country.

<sup>1</sup> See *The Historical Connection of the Jewish People with Palestine*. Published by the Jewish Agency for Palestine.

"In view of the fact that the Arab birth-rate is 2.7 per cent, while that of the Jews is only 1.3 per cent, after initial parity there would have to be a steady, though limited, annual immigration to make up the difference. We are convinced that Arab fears could be removed if Palestine became part of a larger union, consisting of Palestine, Trans-Jordan, Syria and Iraq; this union would contain an Arab population of 5,000,000. Palestinian Arabs would, therefore, have no need to fear Jewish domination. In Palestine the Jews would have the right to purchase land on the basis of parity between Jew and Arab. In the bi-national Palestine, fashioned on the Swiss model, there would be equal rights for both peoples. If stable conditions were established by these methods Trans-Jordan would probably be ready to accept a certain number of Jewish immigrants, quite distinct from the Jewish settlers in Palestine.

"If the attempt to convert Palestine into a Jewish-controlled, or Arab-controlled State, is persisted in, there will be no peace. I am convinced that both the Jews and the Arabs can be won for some sort of solution on these lines. This scheme is put forward on the assumption that there will be in the Middle East a regional body on which the local Governments, as well as the United Nations, will be represented. The Holy Land of three Religions awaits a wise and peaceful answer to its problems."

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My diary records visits to several Jewish settlements, "The settlement of Kirwath Anawym (the City of Grapes) was started twenty-five years ago by Ukrainian and Polish Jews and is about an hour's drive from Jerusalem. There are now 300 settlers and they have effected an amazing transformation, having turned a bare and rocky district into terraced farms that creep up the mountains. On one side of the landscape we looked at the bare and rugged hills and valleys; on the other were orchards, cornfields, and prosperous-looking farm buildings, stocked with splendid Dutch cattle and the finest poultry we had seen anywhere in Asia—and all of this the result of twenty-five years' work. To achieve this transformation must have implied the leading of a very Spartan life."

During the last week of our stay in Palestine at Safad, situated on a mountain-top, near the Sea of Galilee, escorted by Mr. T. Kollek, an Austrian-born Jew, who had spent ten years in the country, working on a collective farm on the lake, we visited several prosperous settlements. "Jewish agriculturists have worked wonders in the territory that lies between the Lebanon and Syria, due north of the Sea of Galilee. Malaria is endemic here. Our troops marched up this country in the Syrian campaign in 1941, and along the roadside were large signposts with the wording, "You have been warned. Do not camp here, this is a highly malarious district." Owing to the war much drainage work has had to be postponed; the first Jew settlers were decimated by the disease. On the way to Daphna a five-year-old Jewish settlement, very primitive Arab settlements and camps of Bedouins are passed. The fellahin live in huts of reed-matting made out of the locally grown papyrus grass.

"A few minutes later, under a sweltering sun, for the trees have not yet had time to grow, we were walking along roads flanked by the orderly homesteads and barns of the Jewish farmers, recent arrivals from Europe, few of whom had worked on the land before. Thirty little naked boys and girls, between the



ages of two and three, were playing by a fountain. Their kindergarten reminded me of similar institutions I had seen on Vienna housing estates before the war. In one hut was the children's dining-room, playroom and dormitory; the tiny mites sit at a small table on 'dolls' chairs.' There were coloured pictures on the walls, and the children pass their lives in luxury compared with the grown-up farm-workers, who have been too busy fighting nature to worry about their creature comforts. They concentrate on the upbringing of the children whom they regard as the hope of the future.

"Many of the Jewish settlements are run on communistic lines; it was surprising to find the Jew, usually supposed to be actuated solely by motives of personal gain and a confirmed town-dweller, throwing himself passionately into community rural life. Under the grateful shade of a carob tree we discussed ethics with a group of Jews, including a fine-faced old Russian, a follower of Tolstoy forty years ago, and now an ardent Zionist—and 'Yetta'—for the settlers call each other by their Christian names—an American Jewess who had deserted the fleshpots of New York nineteen years ago, and is now an enthusiastic upholder of the communal way of life. These farm-workers appeared to have no desire to return to the principles of private ownership, despite their terribly hard existence. Every settler works nine and a half hours a day; there are special groups who do the cooking, washing and mending for the whole settlement; this means that a worker during his leisure hours has no household chores to contend with.

"We lunched in the communal dining-room off ample, but simple, fare; there were eighty of us and we ate at breakneck speed as we knew that further hungry workers were waiting outside for their turn. Every type of Jew was around us, intellectuals with refined faces, others of more bucolic appearance, shaven or unshaven, labourers direct from the fields with work-stained hands, buxom females in skimpy shorts, youths filled with the zest of life, and old men and women worn down by hardship and suffering.

"The remarkable fact emerges that the members of the second generation are following in the steps of their parents, and take a great pride in their communal way of life. As we sat in the hot and crowded room I could not help wondering whether this communistic existence could be the final goal of mankind, because all the happiness and intimacy of home-life appeared to be sacrificed. I kept thinking of the privately owned smiling homesteads of Denmark and Sweden. But perhaps this was an unfair comparison, for these Jews had been fighting a life-and-death struggle with nature, against impossible odds, in a malaria-infested countryside. Many of their number had died, and it is open to question whether individualistic farmers could have stood up to the conditions.

"When the settlers began their fight with nature they planted 100 varieties of fruit-trees to discover which would thrive best in the district. Only three or four passed the test, but the lessons learnt were taken to heart as the valleys with smiling orchards and vineyards bear testimony to-day. It was immensely impressive to see what these refugees from the towns and ghettos of Europe had achieved."

The words of the Hebrew prophets took concrete form before our eyes:

"I will bring again the captivity of My people Israel and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the

wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them." (Amos ix, 14.)

"For the Lord shall comfort Zion: He will comfort all her waste places; and He will make her wilderness like Eden and her desert like the garden of the Lord." (Isaiah li, 3.)

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The British community in Palestine contains protagonists of both points of view, though among the civil servants I found many pro-Arabs, especially among colonial officials who had served previously in Muslim countries. An Englishman who had lived in Palestine since the days of the Turks approached the whole subject from the angle of economics. He began by saying that both Arab and Jew had nothing much to grumble at, as under the Mandate they had both prospered greatly. As the result of British efforts the Turkish yoke had been thrown off and Arab lands had received their independence. Thanks to stable government, and the influx of Jewish capital, the Arabs had benefited very considerably.

The Jews, on their side, had much to be grateful for, too. The Balfour Declaration had enabled them to acquire a position of permanent influence in the country, and while Jewish capital and Jewish hard work had achieved wonders, they would never have had the chance without the stability resulting from British control. He thought the most satisfactory solution would be that Palestine should become a partner-State within the British Commonwealth. Simultaneously the British Government should establish a development fund for furthering the interests of both Jew and Arab. The suggested fund should be impartially administered by a committee of Arabs, Jews and British, who would investigate the possibilities of irrigation, schemes of land reclamation, such as the Jordan Valley development proposal of Dr. Lowdermilk, the non-Jewish American expert on soil conservation.

A leading British banker who had also known Palestine under Turkish rule, referred to the amazing contribution Great Britain had made to the prosperity of the Middle East. As I had myself travelled through Anatolia in 1899 I was able to appreciate the force of his arguments. The British assumption of the Mandate had, in fact, meant that twentieth-century methods had been introduced into a country hitherto living under conditions similar to those of the Middle Ages.

A British civil servant who has spent much time in the Middle East supported the proposal of Dr. Magnes that the migration ban should be lifted, and half a million more Jews admitted, "subject to the country's absorptive capacity, and housing accommodation being available."

From the strategic standpoint Palestine occupies a key position at the meeting-place of three continents, and it is essential that a strong administration, fair to all interests and closely associated with the British Commonwealth, should be in power. Many schemes for the development of Palestine and Trans-Jordan were mentioned to me, such as the construction of a canal to connect the Mediterranean with the Gulf of Aqaba and the gigantic project of obtaining water-power by letting the Mediterranean into the Dead Sea (1,200 feet below sea level). I have no means of assessing the practicability of these or other proposals, though undoubtedly engineers with vision will be required if

Palestine is once again to support a population equal to that it possessed at the beginning of the Christian era, conservatively placed at between two and three millions.<sup>1</sup>

A successful business man respected by both sides thought the Government should remove two main Arab grievances. A special fund should be provided for settling on the land the thousand Arab farmers whose livelihood had been taken from them as a result of Jewish land purchase. He also advocated the creation of a special department, whose duty it would be to formulate a long-term policy for the gradual education of the Bedouin population. In addition he strongly upheld the need for the admission of further Jewish settlers on a large scale.

## CHAPTER IV

### JOURNEY HOME

MY "VALE" SHALL BE BRIEF. I HAVE ALREADY DESCRIBED OUR JOURNEY FROM India to the Middle East. The last stage of our four-years' pilgrimage, from Egypt to Great Britain, was also on a troopship. Life on all convoys must be much the same except that, in the Mediterranean, there was always the possibility of attack from the air, as well as from under the sea.

Our fellow-passengers represented many walks of life—all sections of the Forces of the Empire were included; there were also members of the Palestine Police, Cypriots, Arabs and Jews, Polish officers and W.A.A.C.s, and German prisoners. The child population was a large one, for members of the Palestine Police and others were taking their small families home. Our cabin, dark and diminutive, and with no direct access to the open air, was surrounded by the quarters occupied by mothers and small children. It was almost as if we lived in a nursery. I have never known such vocal infants, they kept up a nightly chorus of howling. Every now and then the irate voice of a naval officer from an adjoining cabin could be heard in the small hours of the morning, shouting: "Oh, do shut up!"—alas, to no avail.

There could have been no greater contrast between our trip across the Atlantic four years before—unescorted, alone and enveloped in mist for the best part of seven days—and our journey through the smiling Mediterranean in a large convoy, in company with many vessels famous in the Merchant Navy, on several of which we had ourselves travelled in the far parts of the world. It was a pleasurable sensation to walk the decks before breakfast and to look across the waters to ascertain if the vessel on which we had crossed the Atlantic in 1937, or gone to India in a few months before the war, or sailed through the Netherlands East Indies, was still with us. The members of the convoy were constantly changing, for when we passed ports with names made familiar by this war, some of the vessels would vanish.

The British Empire depends so largely for its existence on the Royal Navy and the Merchant Navy, that it was a great privilege at the end of our four years of wanderings to have such a sight of their amazing efficiency. When

<sup>1</sup> See *Palestine, Land of Promise*, by Walter Clay Lowdermilk. (Gollancz.)

we crossed the Mediterranean in 1939—then regarded by Mussolini as *mare nostrum*—and called at Gibraltar and Malta, we heard alarming accounts of British unpreparedness. Five years had wrought an incredible change. Gibraltar and Malta had become two of the strongest fortresses in the world; the Italian Fleet was either at the bottom of the sea or in Allied hands; and British aircraft and naval vessels, both on the surface and under the seas, dominated the Mediterranean. We heard stirring accounts from those who had been in them of the convoys that fought their way through to Malta when the island had but a few weeks' supplies.

We lived in a nautical world, for life on an armed merchantman is, from the standpoint of the layman, almost like being on board a warship. The Navy dominated our thoughts. Signals were continuously passing from the Commodore on our ship to escorting war vessels. Our friends among the naval officers explained to me the nature of some of the unfamiliar ships that we saw. There was but little empty space on deck for the passengers—it was rightly taken up by rafts and lifeboats and all the paraphernalia of war.

The bluejackets who manned our turrets and lookouts were fine-looking men; I have never seen sailors in better condition. They went about their duties stripped to the waist, their brown and muscular bodies glistening in the sunshine; it was a sad moment for them when the cold winds of the Atlantic compelled them to put on clothes. A very popular moment each day with the passengers was watching the naval ratings every morning at their physical jerks, which provoked much laughter when the instructor tried to catch out the members of the squad by rapidly mixing his own words of command with those of "O'Grady." The man who originally thought of introducing "O'Grady" into the daily drill was a genius.

There was always something to look at in the convoy—ships coming or going and escorting aircraft circling around—for we were almost continuously under an "air umbrella" right through the Mediterranean—and there was the ever-fascinating spectacle to watch of aircraft landing on aircraft-carriers.


After we passed Sicily several important vessels left us and headed northwards—one of them, a type of ship I had never seen before; I wondered whether a "big show" was about to start. My questionings were answered a few hours after arrival when we listened to the midday News Bulletin and heard of the Allied landing in the south of France.

Before setting out I had thought that I should be able to utilise our weeks at sea for finishing this book, but after the first day I realised that consistent work was out of the question. The days passed quickly enough. Never before had I been away from England for so long. We wondered how conditions at home would strike us compared with the summer of 1940. We realised that at first we should feel very strange, but the daily lectures on board about war-time Britain gave us a survey of war-time problems. We said good-bye to the East "and all that" when we put on our overcoats during four or five days of bitterly cold weather before arriving in British waters.

It was a great moment for us when, on a misty August morning, in 1944, our troopship drew alongside the jetty of the British port whence we had set out for Canada four years earlier. Officials and soldiers were walking up and down the landing-stage. The troops, leaning over the gunwale, were laughing and

pointing at somebody, and spontaneously they raised a cheer. I looked to see what had caught their attention. A British policeman, stolid, imperturbable, and wholly oblivious to the interest he was causing, was walking slowly towards the gangway. To us wanderers he personified the spirit of Britain. At meetings in Canada, in the United States, in the South Pacific, in New Zealand, in Australia and in Asia, we had often listened to the singing of "There'll Always be an England." That provincial policeman was to us the symbol of the small island whose epic fight against overwhelming odds had, in these immortal years, electrified the world.

THE END



# INDEX

## A

Abdul (Bearer), 159, 190, 152  
 Abdul, Gaffar Khan, 153.  
 Abdul Hamed, Sultan, 88, 90  
 Abdur Rahman, Amir, 194, 200  
 Abyssinia, 16, 104, 105, 141  
 Adelaide, 59, 61, 82  
 Aden, 137  
 Afghan Mission, Peshawar, 152, 154  
 Afghan Wars, 193, 194  
 Afghanistan, 135, 137, 151, 152, 167, 191, 192, 194, 195, 196, 197, 199, 200  
 Africa, 74, 104, 105, 141  
 Afridis, 110, 152  
 Agra, 100, 146  
 Ahmed, Sir Sultan, 176  
 Alexander, Field-Marshal Sir Harold, 187  
 Algeria, 187  
 Ali, Mr. Asaf, 92, 93  
 Ali Mahomet, Foreign Minister, Afghanistan, 197  
 Allahabad, 143, 145, 147, 175  
 Allenby, Lord, 214  
 All People's Association, 105  
 Aiyar, Sir C. P. Ramaswami, 119, 120, 121, 172, 177  
 Amanullah, Amir, 194, 199  
 Ambedkar, Dr. B. R., 106, 116, 125, 128, 171, 177  
 America (see United States)  
 America Relations Officer, 168, 200  
 America Relations Officer Press Parties  
 America Army, 51, 54, 112, 145, 168, 173, 179, 187, 208  
 American Aviators, 126, 157  
 American Correspondents, 95, 126, 127, 158, 162, 164, 170, 172, 177, 178, 186, 187, 188, 190, 195  
 American Destroyers (over age), 22, 25  
 American Indian, 35  
 American Legion, 29  
 American Mission (Delhi), 170  
 American Navy, 50, 51, 54, 63, 79, 206, 220  
 American Press, The, 26, 29, 30, 45, 51  
 American Quakers, 19  
 American Red Cross, 29, 44  
 American Revolution, The, 30  
 American Samoa, 52, 53  
 American Tourists, 27, 70  
 American Universities, 14  
 American Volunteer Group, 126  
 American-Australian Relations, 63  
 Amery, Rt. Hon. L. S., 104  
 Amin, Bey, 196  
 Amritsar, 204  
 Anatolia, 219  
 Andaman Islands, 131  
 Anderson, Colonel Henry W., 45  
 Andrews, C. F., 100  
 Aney, M. S., 171

Angell, Sir Norman, 117  
 Anglican Church, 76, 88, 120, 141, 143, 147, 167, 205  
 Ankara, 46  
 Anglo-Japanese Treaty, 12  
 Anglo-Saxons, 10, 11, 12, 23, 28, 36, 37, 70, 79, 80, 117, 158, 198, 201  
 Anti-British, 146, 156  
 Antigua, 22  
 Anti-Nazis, 31  
 Anwar, Mrs., Kabul, 198  
 Apia, 53  
 Aqaba, 219  
 Arabia, 137  
 Arabs, 110, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 219  
 Arab-Jew Relations, 208, 210, 211, 220  
 Arakan Front, 179  
 Armenians, 152  
 Ashram (see Gandhi's Ashram)  
 A.R.P. 113, 116, 161  
 Asia, 62, 63, 74, 105, 134, 137, 141, 161, 167, 197, 217, 222  
 Atlanta, Georgia, 41, 42  
 Atlantic, 19, 20, 22, 27, 48, 50, 220  
 Atlantic Charter, 104  
 Atlantic Fortress, 26  
 Atlantic Monthly, 28  
 Auckland, N.Z., 55, 58  
 Australia, 16, 23, 24, 44, 46, 52, 53, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 72, 78, 92, 104, 108, 109, 128, 133, 150, 157, 163, 203, 212, 222  
 Australia Imperial Force, 60, 62, 65, 71, 74  
 Australian Population Problem, 60, 62  
 Axis, 9, 24, 26, 49, 175, 178, 194, 195, 197, 212  
 Azores, 27  
 Aztec Civilisation, 38, 39

## B

Bagram, 197  
 Bahamas, 22  
 Baker, Sir H., 90, 179  
 Bakhsh, Khan Behadur Allah, 173  
 Balfour Declaration, The, 212, 213, 214, 219  
 Balkans, 40  
 Baltimore Sun, 28  
 Baluchistan, 135  
 Bandeong, 68, 69, 70, 80, 152, 155, 157  
 Bangalore, 115, 116, 161  
 Barbet, Crimson Breasted, The, 125  
 Bardoli, 140  
 Bati, Dholpur State, 96  
 Baroda, Late Gaekwar, 129  
 Barton, Sir Edmund, 100  
 Barton, Colonel L. E., 191  
 Batavia, 63, 70, 71, 72, 80, 152, 155, 157, 158  
 Batterbee, Sir Harry, 58

- Battle of Britain, 19, 20, 30, 48, 58  
 Beaverbrook, Lord, 78  
 Bedouins, 214, 217, 220  
 Beersheba, 214  
 Belgium, 18  
 Beluchistan, 194  
 Benares, 140, 142, 143, 144, 145, 151  
 Bengal, 99, 118, 131, 137, 142, 151, 173, 176, 188, 202  
 Benghazi, 40  
 Benthall, Sir Edward Charles, 174  
 Berkeley, California 49  
 Berkeley, Inst., Bermuda 28  
 Berlin 11, 45, 54, 114, 146  
 Bermuda, 23, 26, 27  
 Bernard, Sir Denis, 27  
 Besant, Annie, 143  
 Bethany, 209  
 Beverley Hills, California, 35  
 Beyrout, 208, 213  
 Bhagavad Gita, 128  
 Bikanir, Maharaja of, 157  
*Bismarck* (Battleship), 52, 132  
 Bismarck, Prince, 23  
 Bombay, 16, 124, 125, 128, 132, 137, 172  
 Bombay, St. George's Hospital, 125  
 Booby Island, 64  
 Borobudur Java, 67  
 Bose, Subhadas, 118  
 Boston Transcript, 19  
 Boston, Mass., 31, 42  
 Botha, General Louis, 100  
*Bounty*, H.M.S., 50  
 Bourassa, M., 100  
 Brady, General F., U.S.A., 173  
 Brahmins, The, 118, 128, 146  
 Brazil, 27, 203  
 Brighton, St. Paul's, 17  
 Britain (see Great Britain)  
 British-American Relations (see English-Speaking Nations)  
 British Broadcasting Corporation, 20, 26, 29, 32, 92, 108, 146, 195, 207  
 British Colonies and Colonial Rule, 25, 27, 28, 63, 72, 73, 74, 76, 80, 141  
 British Crown, 21  
 British Empire and Commonwealth, 10, 15, 17, 21, 22, 23, 25, 30, 31, 36, 40, 45, 46, 48, 56, 58, 59, 60, 63, 72, 73, 74, 76, 80, 81, 82, 88, 89, 92, 93, 100, 104, 105, 106, 110, 111, 112, 114, 120, 126, 129, 131, 134, 135, 136, 137, 139, 141, 147, 156, 167, 171, 172, 176, 182, 183, 185, 190, 197, 200, 202, 203, 204, 206, 207, 208, 211, 212, 214, 219, 220  
 British Empire Air Training Plan, 21, 23, 24, 29, 47  
 British Evacuees, 21  
 British Guiana, 22  
 British Government, 18, 112, 129, 136  
 British India, 67, 127, 179  
 British Museum, 133  
 British Prestige, 30, 69, 73, 76, 111, 113, 118, 124, 126, 145, 188, 194, 195  
 British raj 92 94, 109, 126, 152, 156, 161, 164, 200, 202  
 British War Relief, 29, 31, 44  
 Brooke, Field-Marshal Sir Alan, 187  
 Brune, Sir H. Pridaux, 169  
 Buddha and Buddhists, 83, 84, 145  
 Buchan, John (see Tweedsmuir)  
 Buckingham Palace, 26  
 Buitenzorg, N. E. I., 70, 157  
 Bundles for Britain, 29  
 Burma, 75, 81, 84, 93, 112, 113, 121, 126, 155, 157, 158, 159, 161, 178, 182, 202  
 Burma Road, 78, 83, 85  
 Bustin, F. W., 149  
 Butler, Neville, 30  
 Butler, Dr. Nicholas Murray, 196
- C
- Cairo, 178, 207, 208, 210  
 Calcutta, 80, 81, 82, 86, 87, 88, 89, 109, 112, 113, 137, 142, 155, 158, 159, 173, 176, 179, 188  
 California, 24, 32, 35, 39, 49, 52, 53, 68, 216  
 Cameron, Mr. G. T.  
 Canada, 9, 15, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 32, 44, 47, 57, 60, 63, 104, 133, 203, 221, 222  
 Canadian Air Force, 23, 24  
 Canadian-American Relations, 25  
 Canadian Navy, 21  
 Canadian Press, 21  
 Capetneum, 211  
 Cape York, 64  
 Cape Comorin, 123, 151  
 Carlotta, Empress, The, 38, 39  
 Cardamon Hills, 123  
 Carmel, California, 34  
 Carnegie, A., 13  
 Caroe, Sir Olaf, 169, 200  
 Casey, Rt. Hon. R. G., 46  
 Cawnpore, 89  
 Cecil Hotel, Delhi, 92, 125, 150, 157, 163, 165, 171, 172, 176, 182, 183, 185, 190  
 Celebes Islands, N.E.I., 65, 157  
 Central Assembly, Delhi, 179  
 Central Provinces, 137  
 Chamber of Princes, 170  
 Chamberlain, Mr. Neville, 16, 18  
 Chapultepec, 38  
 Charleston, S. C., 43, 44  
 Charnock, J., 88  
 Chase National Bank, 19  
 Cherry Week, Washington, 46  
 Chhatari, Nawab of, 110  
 Chicago, Ill., U.S.A., 13, 14, 31, 33, 53, 172  
*Chicago Daily News*, 189  
*Chicago Tribune*, The, 48

- China, 10, 11, 12, 32, 51, 63, 64, 67, 68, 70, 72, 73,  
74, 75, 76, 77, 82, 83, 84, 85, 88, 93, 104, 125,  
134, 158, 167, 168, 174, 197  
Christchurch, N.Z., 58  
China Relations Office, 169  
Christianity in India, Java, etc., 66, 68, 76, 81, 84,  
87, 111, 115, 118, 120, 121, 123, 141, 154, 167,  
205  
Chungking, 63, 188  
Church Missionary Society, 154  
Churchill, Rt. Hon. Winston S., 18, 25, 26, 30, 40,  
45, 49, 64, 65, 69, 107, 114, 126, 157, 162, 178,  
187, 195  
City of Benares, 19  
*Civil and Military Gazette*, 149  
Civil War, 41  
Civil Disobedience (*see* Mass Civil Disobedience)  
Clyde, 62  
Cochin, State of, 121  
Cohen, Dr., 215, 216  
*Colliers Weekly*, 79  
Colombo, 45  
Columbia Broadcasting Corporation, 29  
Columbia University, 129, 171, 198  
Commercial Travellers' Association, 59  
Communal Settlement, 218  
Congress (*see* Indian Congress)  
Congress Disturbances, 174, 175, 176, 179, 187, 188  
Constantinople, 90  
Convoy, 205, 206, 221  
Cooper, Rt. Hon. A. Duff, 78  
Cooper, Lady Diana, 78  
Copenhagen, 17  
Corbett, Major J., 156  
Cornwall, H.M.S., 160  
Coronation, The  
Cortes, 38  
Cosgrave, Mr., 100  
Cox, Dr. R. J. H., 152  
Coupland, Sir Reginald, 149, 151, 156, 161, 163  
Coventry, 30  
Cows and Cow Worship, 88, 130, 180  
Coyoacan, Mexico, 39  
Crak, Sir Henry, 92, 157  
Crete, 52, 53, 56, 60, 64  
Cripps, Sir Stafford, 132, 136, 161, 162, 163, 165,  
202  
Cripps Mission, The, 161, 162, 164, 171, 174, 187,  
202  
Croydon, 20, 37  
Cuernavaca, Mexico, 38  
Cunningham, Sir George, 151, 156  
Cunningham, Lady, 151  
Cyprus, 208, 220  
Czechoslovakia, 15, 16, 17
- D
- da Costa, E., 118  
Dadabhoy, Sir Manekji, 92, 141  
Dadar, 128, 130  
Dallas, Texas, 39, 40  
Damascus, 208  
Dan, Palestine, 214  
Danzig, 17, 199  
Daphna, 217  
Datta, Dr. S. K., 139  
Dead Sea, The, 219  
Deakin, Alfred, 100  
Dearborn, Mich., 14  
Deep South, The, 41  
Defence Pack (Canada—United States), 25  
De Gaulle, General, 187  
Dehra Dun, 150  
Delhi (old), 89, 90, 91, 93, 94, 114, 123, 126,  
129, 130, 132, 133, 139, 142, 147, 148, 155, 157,  
162, 165, 169, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180,  
181, 182, 183, 185, 196, 201  
Democracies, 16  
Denmark, 18, 61, 218  
Department Internal Affairs, N.Z., 55  
Destroyers, Over-age (*see* American Destroyers)  
Detroit, 35  
de Valera, Mr., 100, 133, 155  
Dholpur, Maharaj Rana, 93, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100  
Dholpur, Maharani, 98  
Dholpur State, 93, 94  
Diaz, President Porfirio, 38  
Djakakarta, 67, 68, 157  
Dominions, 12, 23, 47, 129, 131, 134, 136, 137,  
151, 163, 178, 202  
Dominion Settlement, N.Z., 58  
Dominion Status, 72, 84, 89, 90, 91, 93, 104, 105,  
114, 153, 204, 213  
Dorsetshire, H.M.S., 132, 150  
Doubleday, F. N., 48  
Dover, Straits of, 146  
Dow, Sir Hugh, 173, 174  
Dow, Lady, 173  
Dublin Castle, 90  
Duchess of Atholl, 19  
Dugan, Sir Winston, 61  
Dugan, Lady, 61  
Dunedin, N.Z., 58  
Dunkirk, 18, 19, 22  
Dutch Attitude to Colour, 68  
Dutch Colonies (*see* Netherlands East Indies)
- E
- East India Co., The, 73, 82, 109  
Eastern States, 31  
Edinburgh, 38, 120  
Egypt, 16, 39, 45, 49, 100, 196, 198, 206, 207, 208,  
213, 220  
Eighth Army, The, 187  
El Alamein, 187, 207  
El Edroos, Major-General Syed Ahmed, 110  
Elephants, 122, 123  
El Paso, 36, 37



Empire Air Training Plan, The (see British Empire)  
*Empress of Canada*, 10  
 Engert, Hon. C. van H., 191, 193, 194, 196  
 England (see also Great Britain), 19, 29, 31, 33, 44, 71, 78, 91, 110, 113, 115, 132, 143, 155, 156, 161, 168, 169, 176, 177, 178, 200, 202, 210, 221  
 English Literature, 168  
 English Speaking Civilisation, 30, 59, 63, 91, 105  
 English Speaking Nations, 13, 15, 30, 33, 36, 41, 44, 48, 50, 67, 120, 167, 169, 172, 173, 184, 195, 196, 203  
 English Speaking Union, 9, 13, 27, 29, 31, 42, 45, 58, 59, 63  
 English Speaking Unity, 25, 36, 41, 44, 45, 48, 110, 168  
 Europe, 15, 16, 19, 23, 28, 36, 43, 44, 45, 48, 49, 58, 61, 87, 108, 135, 154, 166, 201, 203, 213, 215  
 External Affairs, Department (New Delhi), 169

## F

Fairchild, Dr. H. P., 201  
 Fascism, 166  
 Federal Union, 117  
 Federated Malay States, 74  
 Fields, Gracie, 33  
 Fifth Avenue, 26, 29  
 Fifth Columnists, 66, 71, 113, 119, 128, 142, 155, 158, 160, 171, 176  
 Fiji, 54  
 Fireside Talks, 34  
 Fisher, W. E., 93, 158  
 First Great War, 212  
 Florida, U.S.A., 42, 44  
 Ford, Henry, 14, 15, 31, 122  
 Forman College, The, Lahore, 175  
 France, 15, 16, 17, 18, 21, 22, 37, 41, 80, 165, 168, 196, 199, 214  
 Franco-German Armistice, 18  
 Fraser, Col. D. de M. S., 116  
 French-Canada, 21, 23

## G

Galilee, Sea of, 211, 217  
 Gallup Poll, 26  
 Gandhi, Mahatma, 88, 92, 97, 99, 100, 101, 102, 111, 113, 114, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 132, 135, 138, 140, 143, 154, 158, 162, 163, 166, 167, 170, 171, 172, 174, 178, 188, 189, 190, 191, 198  
 Gandhi, Mrs., 138  
 Gandhi The Ashram 99, 100, 101, 106, 107, 135, 139, 142  
 Gandhi, The Fast, 188  
 Ganges, River, 143, 144, 145  
 Garbett, Sir Colin, 141  
 Garden Tomb, The (Jerusalem), 210  
 Generalissimo (see Kaishek, Chiang)  
 Geneva, 11  
 George V., H.M. King, 82, 90, 95

Georgia, U.S.A., 41  
 German Navy, 27, 52  
 Germany, 9, 10, 15, 16, 17, 18, 31, 32, 35, 40, 43, 44, 47, 52, 53, 54, 55, 58, 60, 64, 66, 67, 92, 99, 103, 104, 106, 108, 111, 115, 134, 146, 175, 186, 194, 195, 196, 198, 199, 210, 220  
 Gibraltar, 16, 221  
 Gidney, Sir Claude, 107, 110  
 Gidney, Lady, 107, 108, 110  
 Giel, Mr. H. Batavia, 71  
 Giraud, General, 187  
 Glancy, Sir Bertrand, 149  
 Goa, 81  
 Goebels, 11, 54  
 Golconda, Hyderabad, 110  
 Golden Gate, 49  
 Golden Temple, Benares, 144  
*Gone with the Wind*, 41, 42  
 Gothenburg, Sweden, 17  
 Government of India, 99, 114, 128, 130, 133, 136, 137, 141, 146, 168, 169, 172, 173, 174, 176, 188, 189, 200, 207  
 Govindaswamy, Dr. M. V., 115  
 Gowrie, V.C., Lord, 63, 64  
 Gowrie, Lady, 63, 64  
 Grand Trunk Road, 149  
 Grant-Ferris, R. M. P., 186  
 Great Barrier Reef, 64  
 Great Britain, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 36, 38, 40, 43, 44, 45, 47, 53, 56, 61, 62, 63, 72, 73, 74, 75, 78, 89, 92, 103, 104, 106, 111, 114, 115, 116, 120, 125, 126, 127, 131, 132, 133, 135, 136, 137, 146, 151, 154, 159, 165, 166, 168, 170, 171, 173, 187, 194, 195, 197, 201, 203, 204, 209, 211, 212, 213, 214, 219, 220, 221, 222  
 Greece, 31, 42, 45, 56, 60, 64, 198, 205  
 Griffith, Arthur, 100  
 Grosse Pointe, Mich., U.S.A., 31, 33  
 Guam, 50  
 Guindy, Madras, 111  
 Gurion, Mr. D. Ben, 214, 216  
 Gurkhas, 141  
 Gwyer, Sir Maurice, 146, 147

## H

Habibullah, Amir, 194  
 Hague, Count, 168  
 Hailey, Lord, 74  
 Halekulani, 51, 52, 108  
 Halifax, Lord, 97  
 Hamilton, Bermuda, 27  
 Harrison, Mr. A. St. B. (Jerusalem), 209  
 Harrow, 110  
 Harvard, 25  
 Hasani (Bearer), 87, 100, 101, 124, 147, 158  
 Hastings, Warren, 143  
 Hawaii, 50, 108  
 Hayles, A. A., 112  
 Hearst Press, The, 29  
 Heathcote, Mary, 79

- Hebrew Prophets, The, 25, 218  
 Hemingway, Mrs. Ernest, 79  
*Hermes*, H.M.S. (Aircraft Carrier), 160  
 Hertzog, General, 100  
 Hess, R., 52  
 Heston, 16  
 Himalayas, 122, 161, 168, 194  
 Hitler, Adolf, 11, 16, 17, 21, 23, 26, 32, 33, 34, 40, 44, 49, 50, 59, 61, 66, 71, 78, 80, 92, 105, 106, 154, 172, 195  
 Hitlerism, 11  
 Hind, Major-General N. G., 173  
 Hindi, 117, 131  
 Hindu, The (Madras), 114  
 Hinduism, 67, 68, 88, 89, 92, 93, 94, 97, 103, 113, 117, 118, 121, 122, 123, 124, 127, 128, 129, 130, 133, 134, 135, 137, 139, 140, 141, 142, 144, 146, 149, 150, 154, 161, 168, 170, 171, 172, 174, 175, 189, 201, 204  
 Hindu Industrialists, 130, 164  
 Hindu Kush Mountains, 194, 197  
 Hindu Mahasabha (*see* Mahasabha)  
 Hindu Muslim Relations, 117, 128, 133, 135, 139, 140, 151, 165, 200, 203  
 Hirachand, Walchand, 125, 130  
 Hlaing River, 83  
 Hogg, Wing-Commander H. W., 150  
 Holburn, J. (*The Times*), 191  
 Holdsworth Memorial Hospital, Mysore, 118  
 Holland, 18, 69, 72, 217  
 Holland, Queen of (*see* Queen Wilhelmina)  
 Hollywood, 13, 19, 24, 33, 35, 63  
 Holy Name Society, New York, 29  
 Honolulu, 10, 47, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 68, 69, 72, 80, 107, 126  
 Hong-Kong, 11, 12, 13, 45, 75, 112, 157, 159, 160, 182  
*Hood*, H.M.S., 52  
 Hope, Lady, 111  
 Hot Weather in India, 184, 185, 186  
 Hotz, Miss, 158, 159, 176, 182, 186  
 Hotz Trust, 168  
 House of Commons, The, 115, 135, 164  
 Howe, Quincy, 13  
 Hudson Bay, 25  
 Hull, Mr. Cordell, 13  
 Hur Rising, The, 173, 174  
 Hyat Khan, Sir Sikander, 149, 150, 171, 178  
 Hyderabad, Deccan, 90, 106, 107, 109, 111, 204
- J
- India, 16, 46, 85, 87, 92, 104, 111, 113, 116, 117, 120, 125, 126, 127, 131, 132, 146, 152, 155, 156, 157, 159, 167, 168, 171, 175, 179, 180, 197, 200, 201, 202, 220  
 Indian Army, 85, 92, 128, 141, 150, 152, 179, 192, 193, 202, 204  
 Indian Birds, 182, 183, 184, 199  
 Indian Christians, 87  
 Indian Civil Service, 110, 142, 149, 165, 169, 173, 200, 201  
 Indian Congress, 92, 93, 97, 101, 103, 107, 108, 110, 113, 114, 115, 125, 127, 131, 133, 139, 140, 141, 146, 149, 150, 151, 153, 162, 163, 164, 165, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 176, 177, 178, 187, 191  
 Indian Disunity, 126, 127, 134, 135, 167  
 Indian Empire, 90  
 Indian Liberals, 93  
 India Office, 89, 91  
 Indian States, 90, 116, 119, 122, 131, 169, 170, 204  
 Indian Trees, 184  
 Indian Unity, 135  
 Indo-China, 79  
 Indonesia (*see* Netherlands East Indies)  
 Inglis, Mr. A. (Sandy), 162  
 Iraq, 104, 137, 167, 196, 213, 216, 217  
 Iran, 137, 167, 195, 198, 213  
 Ireland, Southern, 29, 32, 44, 61, 100, 111, 161, 165, 168  
 Ismail, Sir Mirza, 116  
 Isolationism, 13, 29, 33, 36, 48, 79, 203  
 Istanbul (*see* Stamboul)  
 Italy, 9, 10, 11, 16, 17, 35, 104, 111, 177, 194, 195, 196, 199, 206, 221  
 Italian Prisoners of War, 116
- J
- Jalalabad, Afghanistan, 193, 197  
 Jamaica, 22  
 Jamestown, Va., U.S.A., 44  
 Japan, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 17, 27, 32, 46, 49, 51, 61, 63, 65, 69, 71, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 84, 85, 89, 93, 99, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 110, 112, 113, 116, 118, 121, 122, 126, 131, 139, 142, 145, 146, 148, 152, 154, 155, 158, 160, 161, 163, 171, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 182, 192, 196, 212  
 Java, 64, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 73, 76, 152, 155, 157, 158  
 Java, British Occupation, 70  
 Java's Population, 66  
 Jayakar, Rt. Hon. M. R., 125, 127, 128  
 Jerusalem, 208, 209, 211  
 Jerusalem, American Colony, 210  
 Jerusalem, Government House, 209, 210  
 Jerusalem, Gethsemane, 210  
 Jerusalem, Hebrew University, 216  
 Jerusalem, Walling Wall, 210  
 Jews, The, 129, 152, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220  
 Jew-Arab Relations (*see* Arab-Jew)  
 Jewish Agency, 214, 215, 216  
 Jewish Settlements, 217, 218  
 Jinnah, Mr. M., 103, 125, 127, 132, 133, 134, 135, 137, 139, 140, 149, 150, 164, 168, 172  
 Johnson, Gerald W. B., 28  
 Johnson, Col. Louis, 165, 170  
 Jones, Bobby, 41  
 Jones, Miss Nicoll, 75  
 Jordan, River, 219  
 Juarez, 36  
 Juliana, Princess, 65, 70  
 Jumna, River, 179, 181, 182

Jung, Nawab Mahdi Yar, 110  
 Jungle, The, 96  
 Jungle Books, 149

## K

Kabul, 152, 153, 191, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200  
 Kaishek, Generalissimo Chiang, 85, 142, 155, 192  
 Kaishek, Madame Chiang, 138, 142, 155  
 Kali's Temple, 87, 143, 144  
 Kalka, 150  
 Kanarese, 115  
 Karachi, 162, 170, 173, 174, 177, 195  
 Kashgar, 150  
 Kashmir, 135, 182, 192, 194  
 Kashmir Gate, Delhi, 182  
 Keren, 141  
 Khan, Sir Sikander Hyat (*see* Hyat Khan)  
 Khair-un-Nisa, 109  
 Khalidi, Husein Fakhiri Bey, 213  
 Khalifat, 154  
 Khanpur, 175  
 Khyber Pass, The, 152, 192  
 Kiama, N.S.W., 60, 61  
 Killlearn, Lord, 208  
 Kim, 149  
 King-Emperor, 95  
 King, Sir Frederick Truly, 57  
 King, Mr. Mackenzie, 24, 25  
 Kingsmere, 25  
 Kipling, 89, 149, 152  
 Kirkpatrick, Capt. J. A., 109  
 Kirwath, Anawym, 217  
 Kitchener, Lord, 168  
 Koala Farm, 61, 62  
 Kobe, 10  
 Kodak Company, Rochester, N.Y., 19  
 Kollek, Mr. T., 217  
 Kookaburra, The, 61  
 Kopeng, 66  
 Koran, 198  
 Koregaon, 129  
 Kulu, 122  
 Kunzru, Pundit, 92, 147

## L

Labrador, 25  
 Lahore, 148, 149, 150, 151, 155, 175  
 Lahore Assembly, 150  
 Laithwaite, Sir Gilbert, 155, 168, 169  
 Landi Kotal, 192  
 Lataband Pass, 194  
 Latin Civilisation, 36  
 Laurier, Sir Wilfrid, 24  
 Laurentians, 25  
 Leadenhall Street, 130  
 League of Nations, 166, 219  
 Lebanon, The, 212, 213, 217  
 Lend-Lease, 43, 45  
 Leningrad, 58, 92  
 Liberals, The (India), 146  
 Libya, 45, 93

Life, N.Y., 93, 177  
 Light, Francis, Founder of Penang, 82  
 Light, William, Founder of Adelaide, 61  
 Lindbergh, 108  
 Lincoln's Inn, 132  
 Linlithgow, Marquis of, 90, 91, 156, 169, 191, 201  
 Linlithgow, Marchioness of, 90, 91, 156  
 Linnel, Miss, 111  
 Lippmann, Walter, 48  
 Lisbon, 27, 30  
 Liverpool, 19, 64, 221  
 London, 17, 18, 20, 26, 28, 30, 31, 33, 34, 47, 53, 56, 58, 67, 74, 84, 89, 127, 129, 132, 133, 141, 142, 153, 162, 170, 171, 173, 174, 187, 189, 199  
 Los Angeles, 31, 34, 35, 53  
 Lothian, Marquis of, 26, 30  
 Lowdermilk, Dr. W. C., 219  
 Loyalists (in American Revolution), 41  
 Lucas, Dr. E. D., 175  
 Lucknow, 147, 148  
 Luftwaffe, 30  
 Lugard, Lord, 74  
 Lutyens, Sir E., 90, 156, 179  
 Lydda, Palestine, 209

## M

Macassar, N. E. T., 65, 157  
 MacMichael, Sir Harold, 209  
 MacMichael, Lady, 209  
 Macpherson, Dr. N. W. F. P., 154  
 Madras, 111, 112, 113, 114, 124, 126, 161, 165, 171  
*Madras Mail, The*, 112  
 Magnes, Dr. J. L., 216, 219  
 Mahasabha (The Hindu), 114, 125, 130, 131, 149, 151, 162, 164, 170  
 Mahbubia College, 111  
 Mahrattas, The, 129  
 Malabar Hill, 125, 127, 132  
 Malaria, 130, 217, 218  
 Malaya, 70, 73, 74, 76, 80, 81, 83, 110, 112, 113, 114, 116, 126, 140, 151, 155, 160, 161, 175, 182, 210  
 Malayalam, 120, 123  
 Malta, 16, 209, 221  
 Mamdot, Nawab of, 149  
 Manchukuo, 11  
 Mandalay, 83  
 Manila, 13, 80, 158  
 Maoris, 56, 57  
 Marseilles, 16  
 Mary, H.M. Queen, 82  
 Masaryk, Thos., 15  
 Mass Civil Disobedience, 172, 173  
 Masson, Mr. (Explorer), 194  
 Matriarchy, 121  
 Matthews, Mr. Herbert, 172, 177, 187, 195  
 Maximilian, Emperor, 37, 38, 39  
 Maxwell, Sir Reginald, 174, 189  
 Mayo, Miss, 200  
 Mecca, 215  
 Medical Missions, 154

- Medina, 215  
 Mediterranean, The, 16, 43, 49, 56, 112, 206, 212, 219, 220, 221  
 Mehta, Jamnadas, 171, 178  
 Meiji, Emperor, 12  
 Meiji, Era, 11  
 Meiji Park, 11  
 Melbourne, Victoria, 59, 61, 63, 151  
 Mena House Hotel, 207  
 Merrell, Hon. George, 170, 187  
 Mexico City, 36, 37, 38, 39, 47  
 Mexico, Republic of, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40  
 Michigan, Lake, 31  
 Middle East, 53, 56, 74, 107, 134, 141, 196, 205, 207, 209, 212, 213, 215, 216, 217, 219, 220  
 Middle West, 31, 56  
 Millions Club, Sydney, 59  
 Milwaukee, 31  
 Minneapolis, 32  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Mrs. Marsh), 41, 42  
 Moab, 209  
 Moghul Sarai, 142  
 Moghul Emperors, 90, 91, 94, 96, 179, 193, 200  
 Mohamed Hashin, H.R.H., 196  
 Mongols, 192  
 Monkeys, 119, 143, 144, 145  
 Monkey Temple, 143  
 Monsoon, 84, 97, 130, 185  
 Montana, U.S.A., 30  
 Monterey, U.S.A., 34  
 Montgomery, Field-Marshal Sir B., 187, 208  
 Montreal, 21, 22, 25, 26  
 Moore, Arthur, 89  
 Morton, H. V., 210  
 Moscow, 17, 46, 58, 173  
 Mudalier, Sir Ramaswami, 171  
 Mui Tsai, 75  
 Mukirgi, Dr., 139  
 Munich, 15, 16, 22  
 Munshi, Dr. K. M., 125, 127  
 Murray River, Australia, 62  
 Musa, Bey Alami, 212  
 Muslim League, 93, 103, 114, 116, 125, 131, 133, 135, 136, 137, 149, 150, 162, 164, 173  
 Muslims, 66, 68, 92, 93, 94, 103, 106, 115, 117, 123, 127, 128, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 140, 141, 142, 149, 150, 151, 153, 154, 161, 165, 168, 170, 171, 172, 173, 175, 179, 189, 196, 198, 202, 204, 210, 219  
 Mussolini, 9, 16, 33, 199, 221  
 Mutiny, The Indian, 147, 182  
 Mutsuhito, 11  
 Mysore, 111, 113, 114, 116, 118, 130  
 Mysore, Maharaja of, 116, 117  
 Mysore Legislative Council, 115
- N
- Nagpur, 137, 140, 141  
 Nanking, 139  
 Naoraji, Dadabhoy, 133  
 Napoleon III, Emperor, 39  
 Narvik, 18  
 Nash, Hon. W., 58  
 Nath, Raja Narendra, 149  
 Nations, League of (*see* League of Nations)  
 National Arab Fund, 214  
 National Broadcasting Corporation, 33  
 National Socialism, 11  
 Naval Bases, 22, 27  
 Nawaz Begum Shah, 150, 172  
 Nazareth, 211  
 Nazis, 11, 16, 18, 21, 22, 24, 26, 39, 40, 44, 48, 52, 54, 58, 59, 60, 61, 132, 154, 155, 196, 199, 207, 215  
 Negroes, 27, 28, 35, 129  
 Nehru, Jawaharlal, 155, 161, 163, 165, 167, 168, 170, 174  
 Nepal, 90  
 Netherlands, The, 67, 72  
 Netherlands East Indies, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 71, 72, 76, 79, 80, 93, 126, 142, 143, 161, 182, 220  
 Netherlands Trading Corporation, 71, 72  
 New Delhi, 90, 93, 162, 199, 179, 180  
 Newfoundland, 23, 64, 133  
 New Orleans, La., 31, 34, 41  
 New South Wales, 59, 64  
 New South Wales Parliament, 59  
 New York, 28, 29, 33, 48, 53, 218  
 New York Herald-Tribune, 172  
 New York Times, The, 172, 177, 187, 195  
 New Zealand, 16, 23, 24, 44, 46, 47, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 71, 92, 108, 109, 133, 145, 222  
 New Zealand Government, 55, 57, 58  
 New Zealand's population problem, 58, 59, 66  
 New Zealand, Samoa, 53  
 New Zealand's Infant Welfare, 57  
 New Zealand's Tourist Association, 56  
 New Zealand's Travel Club, 58  
 Newall, Sir Cyril, 58  
 Newall, Lady, 58  
 Newell, Colonel H. A., 143  
 Ng Sen Choy, 76  
 Nimla, Afghanistan, 193  
 Nippon (*see* Japan)  
 Nizam of Hyderabad, H.E.H., 109, 110  
 No Foreign War Committee, 33  
 Nogi Shrine, The, 12  
 Noon, Sir Feroz Khan, 91, 92, 171, 178  
 North Africa, 74, 134, 187, 195, 196, 207  
 Northern Territory, The, 63  
 North West Frontier, 110, 151, 152, 154, 155, 176, 192, 194, 197, 200  
 North West Frontier Province, 135, 151, 152, 153, 197  
 North West India, 131, 134, 136, 137, 151, 195, 204  
 Norway, 18, 71, 203
- O
- Oakland, Cal., 49  
 Ogdensburg, U.S.A., 25

Oliver Wiswell, 30  
 Olives, Mount of, 209  
 Olympic Hotel, Seattle, 32  
 Ontario, 24  
 Osaka, 10  
 Ottoman Empire, The, 212  
 Ottawa, 21, 23, 24, 25, 161  
 Oudh, 147  
 Overseas House, London, 18, 47  
 Overseas League, 47, 58, 59, 71, 78, 111  
 Oxford, 161

## P

Page, Walter Hines, 48  
 Paget, General Sir Bernard, 208  
 Pagman, Afghanistan, 200  
 Pago Pago, Samoa, 52, 53  
 Pakistan, 112, 116, 117, 122, 127, 128, 129, 131, 133, 134, 135, 137, 150, 151, 153  
 Palestine, 203, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219  
 Pan-American Union, 36, 46  
 Pan-Islam, 134  
 Panama, 54  
 Paris, 35, 46, 53  
 Parsis, 92, 125, 126, 133, 205  
 Pasadena, 35  
 Pathans, 152, 153, 154, 192, 193  
 Pearl Harbour, 22, 50, 78, 80, 89, 93, 105, 107, 108, 111, 112, 121, 126, 139  
 Penang, 82, 83, 112, 157  
 Penang, Crag Hotel, 83  
 Persia (*see* Iran)  
 Persian Gulf, 204  
 Peshawar, 151, 152, 161, 192, 197, 198  
 Philippines, The, 13, 54, 93, 157  
 Phillips, Hon. William, 171, 189  
 Pithapuram, Maharaja, 111  
 Playford, Hon. T., 62  
 Poland, 16, 18, 31, 220  
 Polish Jews, 217  
 Political Department (New Delhi), 169  
 Poona, 129  
 Pope, His Holiness, The, 117  
 Popocatepetl, 38  
 Portland, Oregon, 32  
 Port Said, 16, 208  
 Portugal, 203  
 Potomac, 45  
 Presidential Election, 1940, 26, 27, 28  
 President's Personal Representative, 171, 189  
*Prince of Wales*, H.M.S., 64, 78, 108, 111, 116, 126, 155  
 Prince of Wales Island, Penang, 81  
 Promised Land, 216  
 Punjab, 85, 135, 148, 149, 150, 155, 171, 173, 195, 202, 204  
 Purvis, Admiral Sir C. E. Kennedy, 27  
 Pyarelal, 139  
 Pyramids, 207

## Q

Qaid-E-Azam, 132  
 Quebec City, 9, 21  
 Quebec Province, 21, 24, 100  
 Queensland, 64  
 Queretaro, 37, 39  
 Quisling, 198

## R

Radhakrishnan, Sir S., 140  
 Raffles, Sir Stamford, 70, 72, 73  
 Raffles, Lady, 70  
 Raisman, Sir Jeremy, 174, 191  
 Rajagopalachari, 113, 114, 139, 163, 165  
 Rajkumari, Amrit Kaur, 102, 103, 138, 139, 140  
 Rajputana, 93  
 Ramakrishna, 143  
 Rampur, Nawab of, 157  
 Rangoon, 80, 81, 83, 84, 85, 89, 113, 116, 142, 152, 155, 157, 159  
 Rangoon Shwe Dagon Pagoda, 83, 84  
 Rao, Shiva, 92  
 Rauschning, Dr., 58  
 Red Army, 60  
 Red Sea, 142, 207  
 Red Shirt Rebellion, 153  
*Repulse*, H.M.S., 64, 78, 108, 155  
 Residency, Lucknow, 147  
 Rhodes, Trust, 31  
 Richmond, Va., 43, 45  
 Rickshaws, 75, 76  
 Roberts, Kenneth, 30, 41  
 Rockefeller Plaza, N.Y., 28  
 Roerich, Nicholas, 122  
 Rolland, Romain, 143  
 Rome, 45, 117  
 Roman Catholic Church, 37, 68, 81, 117, 123, 147, 148, 198, 203  
 Rommel, 187  
 Roosevelt, President F. D., 9, 13, 14, 25, 34, 43, 105, 162, 163, 165, 187  
 Rossiter, William S., 28  
 Rotorua, N.Z., 56, 57  
 Rotterdam, 126  
 Roumania, 16, 23, 40  
 Round Table Conference, 91, 92, 99, 127, 133, 139, 140, 150  
 Roy, Mr. M. N., 172  
 Royal Air Force, 26, 29, 30, 32, 44, 47, 58, 66, 109, 158, 160, 175, 187, 195, 207, 221  
 Royal Empire Society, 59  
 Royal Indian Air Force, 204  
 Royal Indian Navy, 142, 204  
 Royal Navy, 22, 27, 30, 47, 63, 64, 78, 83, 132, 160, 187, 220, 221  
 Ruskin, J., 99, 101  
 Russia, 12, 58, 66, 67, 78, 104, 127, 131  
 Russia (Soviet), 39, 58, 60, 92, 130, 152, 153, 166, 167, 168, 195, 196, 213  
 Russia (Tsarist), 11, 88, 90  
 Russian Turkestan, 197

Russo-German War, 60  
Rustomjee, Mrs., 110, 111

## S

Safad, 210, 211, 217  
Saheb, Dr. Khan, 153  
Salvation Army, 68, 123  
Samoa, 52, 53, 54  
Sanctions, 105  
San Diego, 34  
San Francisco, 35, 47, 49, 50, 59, 66  
*San Francisco Chronicle*, 49, 53  
Sanskrit, 117  
Santa Fé, 47  
Sapru, Sir Tej Bahadur, 145, 146  
Sarasota, Florida, 42, 43  
Sarnath, 145  
Sastri, Right Hon. V. S. Srinivasa, 112  
St. Augustine, Fla., 44  
St. Lawrence, Canada, 20  
St. Lucia, 22  
Satyamurti, Mr. S., 113  
Saudi Arabia, 196, 213  
Savannah, Ga., U.S.A., 43, 44, 51, 126  
Savarker, Mr. V. D., 125, 130, 131, 162  
Sawday, Rev. G. W., 113, 118  
Scotland, 29, 44  
Seattle, Wash., U.S.A., 31, 32, 33, 49  
*Seattle Times*, 34  
Second Front, The, 209  
Secretariat, N. Delhi, 90, 162, 169  
Secunderabad, 109  
Seignior Club, 22, 23  
Sevagram, C. P., 99, 138, 140  
Shabkadar, 152, 153  
Shagai, 192  
Shah Jehan, 96, 154  
Shah Mahmud, H.R.H., 196  
Shanghai, 12  
Shiva, 118, 143  
Siam, 79, 112  
Sicily, 221  
Sikhs, 73, 77, 81, 94, 114, 149, 150, 204  
Simla, 150, 157, 161, 168, 194  
Simons, Major-General Keith, 74  
Sind, 135, 173, 174  
Sind, Desert of, 173, 174  
Singapore, 13, 45, 63, 64, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 78, 79, 80, 81, 93, 112, 137, 140, 143, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 151, 152, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 175  
Singapore Free Press, 79  
Singapore Naval Base, The, 69, 72, 77, 78, 79  
Sinn Fein, 100, 111, 165, 170, 176  
Smuts, Field-Marshal, 215  
Snakes, 82, 143  
Snake Temple, Penang, 82  
Socotra, 207  
Sokolnikoff, M., 9  
Sourabaya, 65

South Africa, 20, 23, 44, 100, 104, 133, 157, 203  
South Carolina, U.S.A., 41  
South India, 115, 116, 118  
South Australia, 62, 64  
South East Asia, 63, 65, 72, 76, 79, 84  
Southern Ireland (*see* Ireland)  
Southern Rhodesia, 133  
Southern States, 44  
Soviet Russia, 9  
Spain, 18, 29, 44, 203  
Spanish-speaking Republics, 36, 44  
*Spectator*, The, 53, 99, 100, 114, 141, 168, 211  
Spithead Review, The, 9  
Spokane, Wash., U.S.A., 33  
Spoonier, Rear-Admiral E. A., 76  
Spoonier, Mrs., 76, 77  
Spry, Mr., 161  
Srinagar, 199  
Stamboul, 199  
Starr, Dr., Peshawar, 154  
*Statesman*, The *Calcutta*, 89, 112  
Statute of Westminster, 104  
Steele A. T., 172, 189  
Stockholm, 17  
Straits Settlements, 71  
Streit, Clarence K., 30, 105, 117, 168  
Sudeten Germans, 15  
Suez Canal, 16, 55, 207  
Sumatra, 161  
Summer Fields, Oxford, 91  
Suttee, 97  
Suva, Fiji, 54  
Sweden, 17, 29, 61, 203, 218  
Switzerland, 29, 217  
Sydney, N.S.W., 59, 60, 61, 63, 66, 92  
Syria, 23, 212, 213, 216, 217

## T

Taft, President, 45  
Taj Mahal Hotel, Bombay, 125, 126, 127, 130  
Tal-shai, Palace of, 96  
Tel Aviv, 213  
Teotihuacan Pyramids, 39  
Texas, U.S.A., 24, 36, 39, 40, 41  
Thailand (*see* Siam)  
Thomas, Sir Shenton, 71, 73, 83  
Thompson, Miss Dorothy, 48  
Thomson, Colonel, 113  
Tiberias, 211  
Tilbury, 17  
Time, N.Y., 93, 177  
*Times*, The, 162, 191  
Tobruk, 60, 187, 208  
Tokyo, 10, 11, 72, 114, 146  
Toltec Civilisation, 39  
Tomara, Miss Sonia, 172  
Tongatabu, 50  
Toronto, 24, 26  
Torquay, 109  
Totalitarian States, 16, 59, 80, 195  
Totalitarian War, 26, 59

Tottenham, Sir Richard, 190  
 Trans-Jordan, 209, 212, 216, 217  
 Travancore, H.H. Maharaja of, 119, 121, 122, 123, 124  
 Travancore, H.H. Maharani of, 121, 122  
 Travancore, State of, 111, 114, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 129, 177  
 Trinidad, 22  
 Trivandrum, 114, 119, 120, 122, 123  
 Trotsky, 39  
 Truby-King, Sir F.  
 Tunisia, 187  
 Turkey, 42, 88, 137, 196, 198, 214, 219  
 Tweedsmuir, Lord (John Buchan), 9  
 Twynam, Sir Henry, 140  
 Twynam, Lady, 140

## U

U. Ba Pe, 84  
 U. Saw, 84  
 Ukrainian, 23, 217  
 Ulster, 113, 134, 151, 187, 196, 197  
 Union now with Britain, 30  
 United Nations, 174, 179, 195, 197, 200, 202, 203, 211, 217  
 United Provinces, 89, 97  
 United States Administration, 22, 27, 28, 29, 50, 107, 138, 195, 199  
 United States of America, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 43, 44, 47, 49, 50, 52, 53, 55, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 67, 71, 73, 74, 78, 79, 83, 85, 89, 91, 93, 104, 107, 108, 112, 115, 116, 133, 165, 166, 168, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 177, 188, 194, 195, 198, 199, 200, 202, 203, 219, 222  
 United States Minister at Kabul, 191  
 Untouchables, The, 97, 114, 121, 125, 128, 129, 130, 131, 139, 170, 171, 181, 202, 203, 204, 212, 222  
 Urdu, 117  
 Usman, Sir Mahomet, 111

## V

Vancouver, B.C., 10, 32  
 Vancouver Island, 32  
 Vatican, The, 16  
 Vedantic Writings, 117  
 Versailles, Treaty of, 215  
 Viceroy, The, 89, 90, 93, 114, 155, 157, 162, 164, 168, 169, 174, 177, 188, 189, 190, 202  
 Viceroy's Council, The, 171, 177, 189, 191  
 Viceroy's House and Garden, 90, 91, 155, 156, 162, 169, 179, 191, 196  
 Vichy, France, 79, 187  
 Victoria, Queen, 45, 52, 95, 194, 200  
 Victoria, B.C., 32  
 Victorian England, 55  
 Victoria, League, The, 59

Victoria Station, 34  
 Virginia, U.S.A., 41  
 Vizagapatam, 161

## W

Waikiki, 51  
 Wake Island, 50  
 Wales, 29  
 Walton (Lahore), 150  
 Wardha, 100, 101, 106, 137, 139, 158, 174  
 Wardha Congress Guest House, 100, 101  
 Warner Brothers, 19  
 Warsaw, 17  
 Washington, D.C., 14, 26, 30, 43, 45, 46, 90, 139, 194, 213  
 Washington, George, 33  
 Wauchope, Sir Arthur, 209  
 Wavell, Field-Marshal Lord, 40, 91, 99, 147, 157, 169, 202  
 Wavell, Miss Joan, 187  
 Waziristan, 194  
 Wellington, N.Z., 55, 57, 58  
 Wesleyan Mission, Mysore, 113, 118  
 Westcott, Dr. Foss, Metropolitan of Calcutta, 112  
 Western Ghat, Mts., 119  
 Western Hemisphere, 25  
 West Indies, 141  
 Westminster Abbey, 25, 34  
 Whakarewarewa, N.Z., 56  
 White Australia, 63  
 White House, The, 14, 46  
 White Paper on Palestine, 212  
 White, The William, Committee, 29  
 Whyalla, S. Australia, 62  
 Wildflower Hall, Simla, 168  
 Wilhelmina, H.M. Queen, 65, 67  
 Williamsburg, 44  
 Willingdon, Marquis of, 119  
 Wilkie, Mr. Wendell, 26, 28  
 Wilson, President Woodrow, 14  
 Windsor, Duke of, 95  
 Woods, Mr. N. W. F. Police, 153  
 World Unity, 134  
 World War I, 194  
 World's Work, 48  
 Worcester, Mrs., 42  
 Woosung, 11, 12  
 Wylie, Sir Francis, 196, 197  
 Wylie, Lady, 196

## Y

Yangtse, The, 12  
 Yokohama, 10  
 Yorktown, 44  
 Yugoslavia, 31, 45

## Z

Zadir Shah, King, 194, 196, 200  
 Zionism, 213, 214, 215, 216, 218, 219











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